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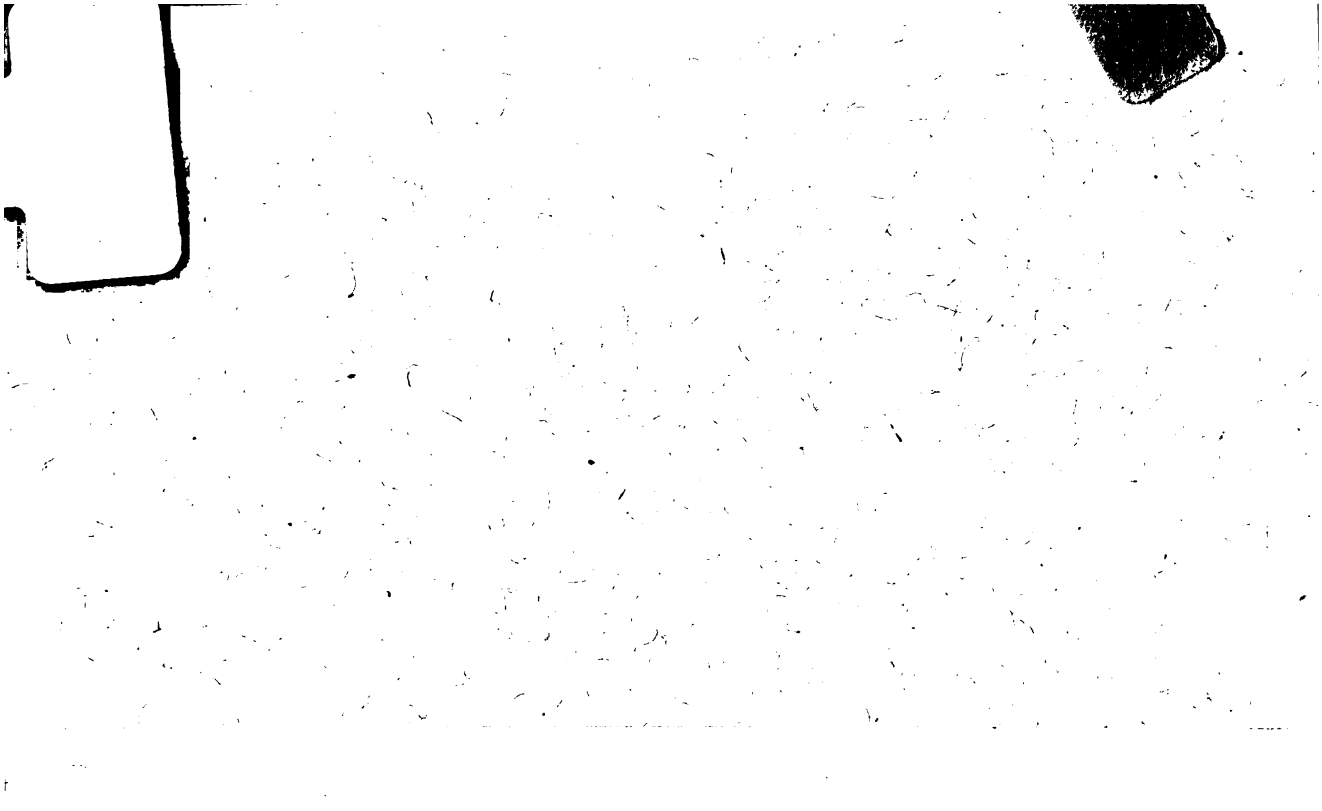
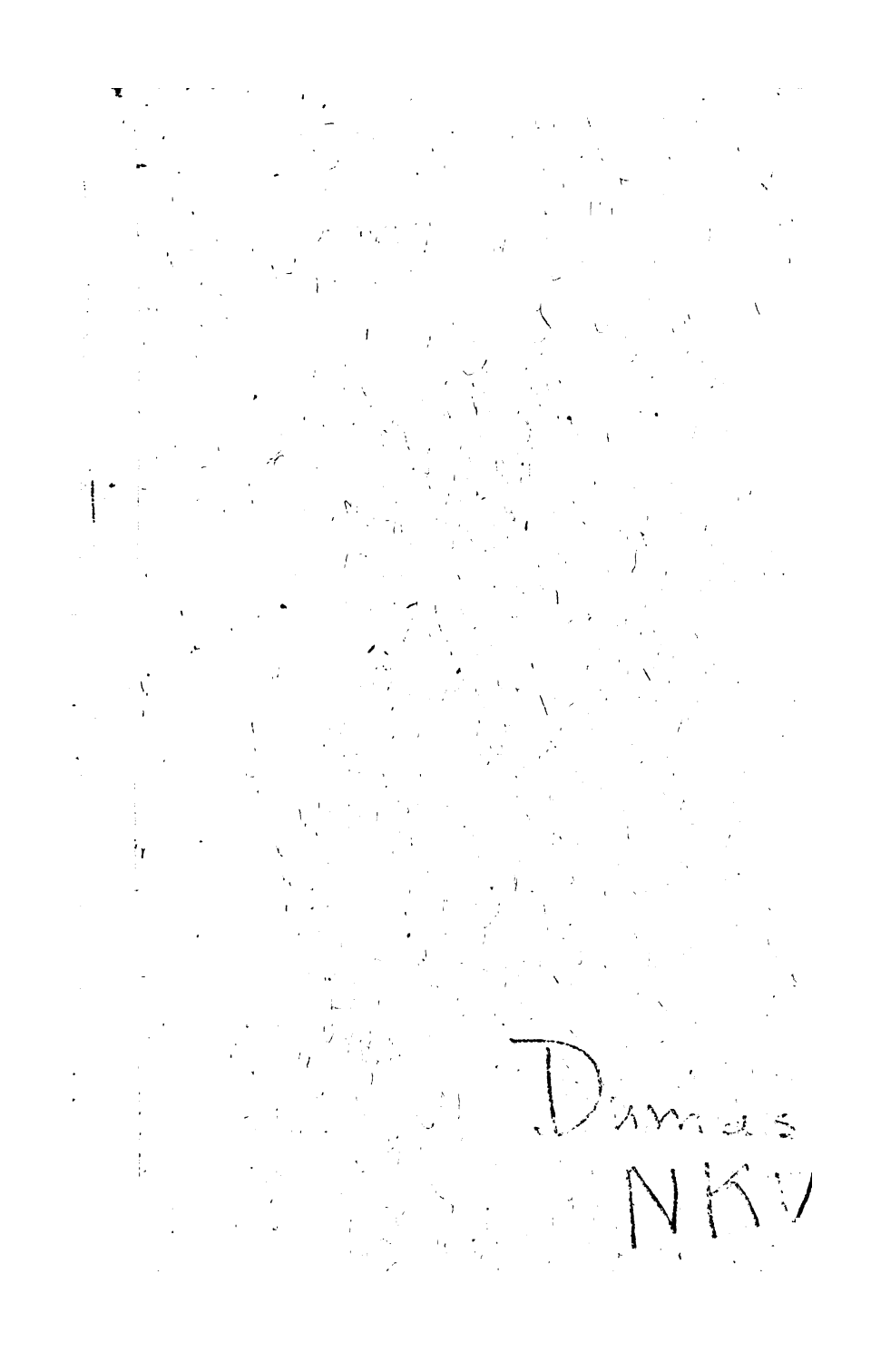



Dumas
NKV

men as hostages, keep my equipages, and let me go
my horse."

"*Parbleu!* how very kind and obliging! T
equipages and your men are mine already."

"Then, at least, let me speak a few words to
young knight, since he is free."

"A few words about your ransom?"

"Certainly; at what do you place it?"

"At the sum which was found upon you and
men, — a gold mark and two silver ones."

"Very well," said the knight.

"Now, then," said Caverley, "say whatever
please to him."

"Listen to me a moment, sir knight," saic
gentleman from Aragon.

And both drew aside that they might speak mc
their ease.

[illegible]

HOW THE KNIGHT OF ARAGON PURCHASED HIS RANSOM FOR TEN THOUSAND GOLD CROWNS

CAPTAIN [illegible] gers very [illegible] drew [illegible] it was [illegible]

"[illegible]" [illegible] but we [illegible] your [illegible] those [illegible]

"And [illegible] lieve me [illegible] scarcely [illegible]"

The stranger [illegible]

"[illegible]" [illegible] shall [illegible] years [illegible] have learned [illegible] ent servant [illegible] and [illegible] loved [illegible] ask you [illegible]

"Speak," [illegible]

"You [illegible] bandit who [illegible] does not think [illegible] in detaining [illegible] journey."

"Yes, seigneur," responded Agénor, ol surprise that since they began to conve Spaniard spoke the purest French, though accent.

"Well," continued the other, "however your need of resuming your journey, mir great; and, at whatever price, I must esca hands of this man."

"Seigneur," said Agénor, "if you will that you are a knight, and will give me y word, I will in turn pledge my honor to Capt and obtain your freedom with my own."

"That is exactly what I wished to ask claimed the stranger, joyously. "You are as you are courteous, sir knight."

Agénor bowed.

"Are you of noble birth?" he inquired.

"Yes, Sir Agénor, and I may add that fe can boast of higher than myself."

"Then," said the knight, "you have an than that you gave awhile ago?"

"Yes," responded the knight, "but — an prove your courtesy to the utmost — you mu fied with my word of honor, without knowing for this I cannot disclose to you."

"Not even to the man who is ready to pledg for yours — not even to the man whom you as for you?" said Agénor, surprised.

"Sir knight," answered the stranger, "I re self for a cautiousness which seems unworthy but there are grave interests at stake which and these interests are not mine alone. Obta erty at what price you choose, and by the faith man, whatever the price may be, I will pay

if you will permit me to add a word — I would say that you will never have cause to repent having obliged me upon this occasion."

"Enough, enough, seigneur," said Mauléon; "ask of me a service, but do not try to buy it in advance."

"Sir Agénor," said the stranger, "you will appreciate later that it was my loyalty which led me to speak thus, for had I chosen to deceive you for the moment, I could have given a false name, and as you do not know me, you would have been compelled to content yourself."

"I just had the same thought," said Mauléon. "You shall be free the very instant I am, seigneur, if I am still in Captain Hugues de Caverley's good graces."

Agénor left the stranger, who remained in the same spot, and returned to Caverley, who was impatiently awaiting the result of the conference.

"Well, my dear friend," said the captain, "did you get any farther than I, and have you discovered who this Spaniard is?"

"A rich merchant of Toledo, who repairs to Paris on business of the utmost importance, and professes that his detention will cause the gravest injury to his affairs. He asks me to be his security. Will you accept me as such?"

"Are you willing to be?"

"Yes; having shared for a time his situation, I naturally sympathize with him. Come, captain, deal fairly with him."

Caverley reflected.

"A rich merchant," he repeated, "who has need of his liberty to carry on his business — "

"Sir," whispered Musaron in his master's ear, "were you not a little imprudent just then?"

"I know what I am about," answered Mauléon.

Musaron bowed as one who renders homa wisdom.

"A rich merchant," repeated Caverley. he is! In that case it will cost him mor were a mere nobleman, and our first price mark and two of silver holds good no longer.

"And that is the reason why I have told who he is, captain! I do not wish to hinder ing from him a ransom worthy of his position

"Really, sir knight, you are a fine fellow, told you so before. But how much will he that mentioned in your long conversation?"

"He told me," said Agénor, "that I migh as five hundred crowns, silver or gold."

Caverley did not reply; he was absorbed in

"Five hundred gold crowns," he repeate would be well enough for a simple merchant said he was rich, remember that."

"I do remember it," answered the knigh made a mistake in telling you that; but as must pay the penalty of his mistakes, we wi ransom at one thousand crowns, and if I am pay five hundred crowns for my indiscretion must."

"That is hardly enough for a rich merchant," Caverley. "A thousand crowns! why, that the worth of a knight's ransom!"

Agénor's eye consulted the stranger whose in was defending, and an affirmative glance told hir might increase the price.

"Then let us double the sum and call it an agr said the knight.

"Two thousand gold crowns," replied the *con* astounded himself at the value the stranger set

person. "Two thousand crowns! But this must be the wealthiest merchant in Toledo! No, faith! I believe this is a stroke of luck, and I will make the most of it. Let him double the sum, and then we will think about it."

Agénor a second time glanced towards his client, who again made him a sign in the affirmative.

"Well, then," said the knight, "if you are so difficult to please, we will go as high as four thousand crowns."

"Four thousand gold crowns!" exclaimed Caverley, stupefied and transported with delight; "why, this is a very Jew! and I am too good a Christian to let a Jew escape for less than — "

"How much?" repeated Agénor.

"For less than" — the captain hesitated at the sum he was about to name, for it seemed exorbitant even to himself — "for less than ten thousand gold crowns. Faith, I have said it now, and must hold by it! And upon my word of honor, it is a mere nothing!"

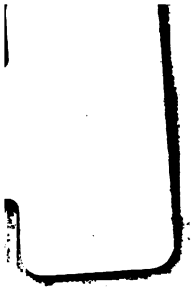
The stranger made an almost imperceptible sign of assent.

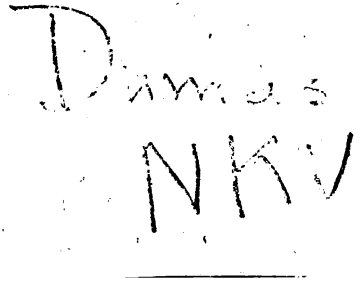
"Your hand upon it," said Agénor, extending his hand to Caverley; "we agree to the sum, and the bargain is concluded."

"Wait a moment, wait a moment!" said Caverley. "I will not accept a knight as security for ten thousand gold crowns! *Rate du Pape!* One would need to be a prince to offer such a guarantee as that; and even then, I do not know whether I would accept it."

"Traitor," cried Mauléon, advancing towards Caverley, and placing his hand upon his sword, "I believe you doubt my word!"

"No, no, my boy," replied Caverley, "you are mistaken; it is not you I doubt, but this other! Do you really believe that, if he had once escaped my clutches, he would





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The Romances of Alexandre Dumas.

NEW SERIES.

AGÉNOR DE MAULÉON.

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

1897

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fraternities form the theme of those seemingly endless Iliads and Odysseys of which that prolific brain never wearied.

Dumas was a conjurer. He appeals to a winged faculty finer, more potent even than reason or judgment, — the imagination. For the brain of Alexandre Dumas was a giant-chimera, in whose depths strange and fabulous riches were concealed. For him human life itself was translated into terms of fiction. No historiographer ever followed authentic documents more carefully and minutely than he, yet even when he attempts most seriously to tell the story of his own life, the winged steed flies away with him, and he plunges his reader and himself into the most delicious and improbable fiction!

The more improbable grows the narrative, the more joyous is the abandon of the narrator. He warms us like wine. His spirits effervesce and overflow. He takes the least child or the sagest and oldest of us all into his confidence, and allows the lowliest to penetrate the secret of his self-elation, and to share it. His boundless, audacious, care-free trust in his own resources, unhindered by thought for the morrow, his fine flush of pride at his own successes and gallantries, the least reader feels it all.

Is it D'Artagnan, Porthos, or Aramis who speaks to us? Certainly, but, peering over his shoulder,

you see always the genial, gay, and laughing countenance of the great necromancer of the Nineteenth Century! He says with Rosalind, "My way is to conjure you!"

And certainly no kindlier, larger nature has uttered itself than that of this immortal Child of French Literature. His laughter leaves no sting behind; he understood men's foibles and his own, but never to sneer or to satirize them. He was gladly and frankly content with the world as he found it. He had no special motives nor morals worth mentioning, no aims for regenerating mankind. If the note of sadness steals into his work, it is quite accidental; he cries out merely as a child might. He has stumbled, is hurt a little. The next moment he picks himself up with a smile!

Deep moods of melancholy, morbid introspection, wise provision for the future, he does not know what these things mean. To-day a prince, tossing largess far and wide, to-morrow a beggar! Yesterday he was wining and dining with royalty. Twenty-four hours later he is a joyous vagabond, and equally undisturbed by fortune's frowns or favors.

He not only helped to support a retinue of retainers and beggars, but a whole menagerie of four-footed beasts as well. A servant incautiously dares to object, because at one time there were thir-

teen of one kind to care for, which was, in his opinion, too many. Dumas Père tells him joyously in reply that they must add another dog to the menagerie, for he observes sagely, "Thirteen is an unlucky number!"

Underneath every fanfaronade, every bizarre utterance, beats the generous, tender heart of this *Enfant Prodigue* of France.

"Le Bâtard de Mauléon," written when Dumas was in the prime of his manhood, shows all the characteristics of the writer and the man.

In his dealings with historic events, with the personages who figure in this Romance of the Fourteenth Century, Dumas follows, in minuter details, authentic records, divers manuscripts to which he had access; he was a most diligent, laborious searcher among the dusty archives of bygone centuries. He built his romance always upon a solid substratum of historic fact.

The knight who plays the leading rôle in the romance is not a fictitious character. Readers of Froissard will remember how the terrible Knight of Mauléon himself, in a chapter of truly formidable length, relates the tale of his deeds to the indefatigable chronicler, who with absolute impartiality recorded every incident related to him, knowing so well "that when I am dead and rotten, this grand and lofty history shall be known far and wide, and

all noble and worthy folk shall therein take great pleasure and profit." [1]

The Knight of Mauléon, the hero of the romance, without whose providential assistance at many a critical moment, neither Henry of Trastamare nor Charles V. nor even the redoubtable Du Guesclin himself could have overcome the enemy, this brave, romantic young Frenchman, who after a series of remarkable adventures, sees his happiness vanish forever, is a far more interesting character for modern readers than the formidable knight who related his history to the chronicler. And indeed it seems that the bastard did not tell Froissard all his history. It was reserved for a mightier genius to penetrate the heart of the good knight's secret; to learn what greater conquests than those of the sword he had made; to discover that not merely loyalty to King Charles, but the love of the gentle Aïssa spurred the knight to those valorous deeds Froissard describes. There could have been no Trojan War but for Helen. And we may believe that the fortunes of those wars between France and Spain were not a little influenced by the heart-affairs of the fair Aïssa! This is the license of fic-

[1] The reader who is interested in that "grand and lofty history" will find a delightful paper on the subject in "Excursions in Libraria," G. H. Powell. The industrious bibliophile has resurrected a mediæval Mæcenas, and given us as well a vivid picture of the times in "A Gascon Tragedy."

tion, which, like poetic license, fully justifies itself to the lover of romance.

And now for the historical characters of the tale.

Don Pedro, surnamed by some The Just, by others, The Cruel, is without doubt the villain *par excellence* of the romance, and after many vicissitudes receives his just reward. He was an historical villain as well, and Dumas in depicting him has not overdrawn, if we may believe contemporary French history of that period. Dumas has followed authentic documents very closely.

There is not the slightest reason to doubt that Don Pedro was a veritable Bluebeard, that no other monarch of that century had a Chamber of Horrors which could even compare with his; it was constantly filled to overflowing with his victims, and not the least conspicuous of these were his various wives, for in the matter of wives Don Pedro was as capricious and fastidious as Henry VIII. of England.

The tragic and untimely end of one of them, Blanche of Bourbon, sister-in-law of the French king, led to those events which culminated in the battle of Montiel, and the murder of Don Pedro by his half-brother, Henry of Trastamare. The main incidents in the assassination of Pedro's unfortunate queen, as related by Dumas, vary but slightly from the tale as told by the author of "La Chronique de Bertrand Du Guesclin."

The Excursionist in Libraria relates it thus: "When at the suggestion of a trusty Jew (whose fair daughter he loved) Pedro had despatched a sergeant to strangle his wife (sister of the King of France), he revoked the order two days later, thinking that the murder of a virtuous lady *of such high lineage* might run counter to some dimly discerned ethical convention! It was unfortunately too late. The sergeant, wearying of the 'pretty orisons' which she had leave to say first, had stifled the queen with a cushion, and thus the whole force of Pedro's repentance was diverted upon the Jew. The man of money was beguiled awhile by the redemption of his teeth at 100,000 crowns apiece, which (according to the biographer of Du Guesclin) seriously impoverished him! But to Pedro it seemed but poor fun. The wicked Jew was accordingly tortured in true mediæval fashion, blinded with hot irons, *écartelé*, and finally hanged."

Don Pedro was murdered in 1369 by Henry of Trastamare, who, his rival removed, became sole ruler of Spain. It is natural to suppose that Henry having usurped his brother's crown, having murdered him in self-defence, must have felt compelled to vindicate and indeed glorify his own character at the expense of his royal brother, and that as patron of letters he encouraged not a little the efforts of contemporary historians to vilify the defunct Don

Pedro. The impartial reader must believe that even Don Pedro himself was not as black as he is painted. The French allies of Don Henry naturally viewed his opponent's character from the least favorable standpoint, and it may be suspected that the "Chronique," though most interesting, is not impartial history.

Spanish historians and dramatists have given a very different picture of this monarch, whose powerful intellect and keen abilities were far in advance of his age. And the reader who would avail himself of their researches can consult Prosper Mérimée's "Histoire de Don Pedro."

Henry of Trastamare did not live many years after the murder of the royal brother he supplanted.

While he perhaps lacked those vices whose open display rendered Don Pedro conspicuous, he lacked also the royal virtues of his brother. Thoroughly unscrupulous, scheming, always considering how to turn circumstances to his own advantage, he does not appeal very strongly to posterity's regard; policy, cold calculation, and self-interest were his guiding motives from first to last. There is no doubt, however, that he was grateful to France for the timely aid which won him a crown, and proved it practically by rendering aid in return. But how much spontaneous gratitude had to do with this, how far mere

motives of expediency moved him, it would be difficult to tell.

Charles V., the third royal actor in the drama, the only king of France who has ever received the title of The Wise, was a most modern monarch, prudent, clever, patient, and reflective; in the midst of adverse circumstances calmly awaiting the unfolding of events, at the critical moment knowing how to profit by them.

Though he never led the armed forces of France to a single military victory, he achieved for her the still greater victories of peace; his policy betrayed a far more enlightened spirit than that of mere feudalism. He reorganized the finances of France, endeavored to drive out her enemies, made her a powerful nation commercially; he protected art and letters and founded the Royal Library; he built for the future.

He was as fortunate as prudent in his choice of leaders who understood how to organize the military forces of France, and to lead them. He won their loyalty, and understood how to utilize their services for the glory of France. His efforts were directed towards national unity. He won, if not the love, at least the respect of his people. They feared him.

Bertrand Du Guesclin may justly be considered the real hero of the mediæval epic of France, without doubt her greatest military leader in the Middle

Ages. He divides with the marvellous Maid of Orleans the love and worship of French hearts. As is inevitable with a hero who has won the veneration of a nation, the life and deeds of this Breton knight have been glorified to such an extent, so much of an apocryphal nature has clustered about his name, that it is difficult to sift fact from fiction in his history.

The romance of Dumas terminates with Du Guesclin's victory at Montiel. His career however did not end there. True Frenchman to the last, he died fighting for France and glory!

But even this loyal and faithful servant of King Charles, most modern of monarchs, experienced the ingratitude of kings, was suspected by Charles V. himself of treason. Even the wisdom of The Wise nodded occasionally, it seems. The reply of the blunt, brave Breton knight is characteristic. He at once declares his willingness to lay down his sword, that beautiful blade presented by his royal master, and blazoned with the lilies of France.

The prudent Charles is alarmed. He cannot dispense with Du Guesclin's services so easily. An ambassador is sent to expostulate with the indignant hero. The Breton Achilles replies, "All I have I owe to the king's kindness, but I must guard against such indignity as this. It shall not happen a second time. That such a man as I should be suspected once! I will die in Spain, whither I will

go, and bury my despair! Ah, had I but died in France a year sooner!"

But he thinks better of his resolve, and is induced to take up his sword again in the defence of France.

The last mission bestowed upon him by King Charles was that of expelling the English from Auvergne. He set out in 1379. The last chapter of his history opens: we see him besieging the town of Château-neuf-Randon, then occupied by an English garrison. The fortress is compelled to capitulate.

But for some time the good constable had been suffering from an internal ailment, brought on by many cruel combats. And his activity during these days of the siege aggravated the malady, and exhausted his strength.

The governor of the place, Le Sire de Roos, promised to surrender in six days, if succor did not come. The constable signed the capitulation on his couch, and never rose again.

According to the old legend, his principal leaders gather, weeping, about his couch; he speaks: —

"I commend unto God my wife and my king, and as I have been loyally faithful to both, may the Lord Jesus Christ grant me pardon for my sins. Farewell, my friends. May God give you a good constable who will aid you to gain glory! May He remember you whenever you make war!"

Turning to his friend Sancerre, he delivered into

his valiant hands the glorious blade raised so often in behalf of France, and said: "Give this sword unto the King of France. Commend me to him, and to all the Barons of the Kingdom. And ye, my friends, pray for me, for my time has come. Love one another, sustain each other, and serve the good king. Farewell!"

He fell into Sancerre's arms and expired. Thus passed away in the flower of his prime the mightiest general France had known, that true knight of God, Bertrand Du Guesclin. Apocryphal as part of the legend concerning him may be, sincerity and truth are stamped upon it.

Charles realized what France had lost, and even desired that the knight he had suspected of treason should be buried within the tomb of kings at St. Denis. But Charles himself did not survive Du Guesclin many months. Only a decade after the death of Pedro, the three great actors of this mediæval drama, Henry of Trastamare, Du Guesclin, and Charles V., almost within a year of each other, pass forever from the scene. The curtain falls.

Leaving the romance the reader may perhaps be interested in the cheery old chronicler himself, for Dumas does not attempt to conceal from us that it is to Froissard he owes the chief sources of his inspiration. He goes still further, and with charming self-abnegation attributes even the authorship of his

romance to Froissard, informing us gravely that he has but resurrected an unedited manuscript of the mediæval chronicler of fact, and transcribed in the third person what was narrated in the first. There is something delicious for him who reads between the lines, in this frank confession of Dumas that he desires Froissard himself to stand godfather to his romance! For if ever in the fraternity of letters, centuries apart, there have lived two men whom nature and fortune designed to be spiritual confrères, they are that mediæval chronicler of fact and this modern chronicler of fiction! In that shadowy and mystic borderland separating fact from fiction, both dwelt. If only the chronicler of "Imaginary Conversations" could have contrived to overhear one between Froissard and Dumas!

They had the same tastes, — loved and glorified wine, woman, and good cheer, war and the chase. They were historiographers and travellers, both of them. What glorious days and nights they might have spent together, what tales, what exploits they might have told each other!

Dumas realized that it was a mere mishap of fortune that placed a barrier of five centuries between Froissard and himself, and he overleaps it by fathering upon Froissard his romance.

And we may truthfully say that if the chronicler had not paid that famous visit to Gaston Phœbus,

Comte de Foix, Dumas could never have written this romance. For if it had not been for that journey, Froissard would never have met the bastard himself.

Let us turn to the old Chronicle. It is the year 1388.

> "Froissard d'Escoce revenoit
> Sus un cheval qui gris estoit,
> Un blanc levrier menoit en lasse."

So he describes himself, — the gay chronicler whom, after wanderings far and wide, we meet travelling in the south of France, in search of materials for "that grand and lofty history" which always "finds us young, and keeps us young!" On this occasion his pilgrimage had a special object.

He falls in with a good knight, Messire Espaing de Lyon, a most complacent and voluble gentleman, who for some time accompanies him on his journey. They converse as they ride, mutually charmed and instructed.

Even their horses improve the opportunity of the hour, and become friendly; the war-steed of Messire Espaing slackens its pace to keep at short distance from the steed of the ecclesiastic, and so the two knights, followed by their squires, canter on, exchanging in lively and artless fashion the chivalrous compliments of the day, always delighting and improving each other.

They arrive at a town; at once they examine its means of defence, and communicate their mutual impressions. Messire Espaing proves a veritable guidebook as to the local geography and history of Gascony.

They come to the pass of Larre; the voluble Sire Espaing proceeds to describe the famous action that had taken place there, and our chronicler religiously transcribes it for posterity.

This incident and one which soon follows suggested in part to Dumas the theme of his romance.

The two repair to an inn, seeking lodgment for the night. Here they encounter the warlike Knight of Mauléon, who at once kindly volunteers the history of his life and deeds.

It will be remembered that the special object of Froissard's journey was a visit to Gaston Phœbus, Comte de Foix.

For those not already familiar with the features of this mediæval Mæcenas, described in such glowing language by the artless chronicler of fact, we quote the words of Froissard.

It was his custom of an evening to read to his patron, the noble Gaston Phœbus, portions of his work, and we may imagine with what satisfaction the earl, who had murdered his son, banished his wife, not to speak of minor crimes, may have listened to Froissard's eulogy. Here it is:—

"The next day we departed and roode to dyner to Montgarbell, and so to Ercye, and there we drank, and by sonne-setting we came to Ortaise; the knight alighted at his own lodgynge, and I alighted at the Mone, where dwelt a squier of the Erles Ernalton de Pyne, who well recuyued me, because I was of Fraunce. Sir Spayn of Lyon went to the castele to therle and founde him in his galarye, for he had but dyned a lytele before, for the erles usage was always, that it was high noone or he arose out of his bedde and supped euer at mydnight; the knight showed him how I was come thider, and incontinent I was sent for to my lodgynge, for he was the lorde of all the world y^{t} moost desyred to speke with strangers, to here tidynges. Whan the earle saw me, he made me good chere, and retayned me as of his house, where I was more than XII weekes, and my horse well entreated, the acquayntaunce of him and me was bycause I had brought with me a boke which I made at the contiplacion of Vmslance[1] of Boesme duke of Luxembourge and of Brabant, which book was called the Melyader, conteyninge all the songes, baladdes, rondeaux, and vyrelayes which the gentyle duke had made in his time, which by imagynacion I had gadered toguyder, which book the erle of Foiz was gladde to see; and every night, after supper I reed therin to hym, and while I reede, there was none durst speke any worde, bycause he wolde I should be well vnderstande, wherin he took great solace; and when it came to any mater of questyon, than he wolde speak to me not in Gascoyne, but in good and fayre frenche; and of his estate and house I shall somewhat recorde, for I

[1] Winceslaus of Bohemia, a mediæval Nero, who emulated him also in cultivating the Muses at the expense of his hearers.

taryed there so long that I might well perceyue and knowe moche. This erle Gastone of Foiz, with whom I was at y^{t} time, he was of a fiftie year of age and nyne; and I say I have in my tyme seen many knyghtes, kynges, princes, and other, but I neuer sawe none lyke hym of personage, nor of so fayre forme, no so well-made; his vysage fayre, sanguyne, and smyling, his eyen gray and amorous wher as he lyst to set his regarde; in euerythyng he was so parfete that he can not be praised to moche; he loued that ought to be beloued, and hated that ought be hated, he was a wyse knight, of highe enterprise, and of goode counsayle; he neuer had mys-creant with hym; he sayd many orisons euery daye; a nocturne of the psalter, matyns of our lady, of the holy goost, and of the crosse and dirige euery day; he gaue fyue florens in small money at his gate to poore folkes, for the loue of God; he was large and courtesse in gyftes; *he could ryght welle take where it parteyned to hym*, and to delyuer agayne wher as he ought; he loved hoūdes of all beestes wynter and somer; he loued huntyng; he never loved folly, outrage, nor foly larges; every moneth he wold knowe what he spended.

"He had certayne cofers in his chambre, out of the which ofte tymes he wolde take money to gyue to lordes, knyghtes, and squyers suche as came to hym, for none shoulde depart fro hym without some gyft.

"He was of good and easy acquayntaunce with euery man, and amorously wolde speke to thē; he was short in counsayle and answers.

"At mydnight when he came out of his chambre into the hall to supper, he had before hym XII torches brennyng, borne by XII varlettes, standyng before his table

all supper; they gaue a gret light, and the hall euer full of knyghtes and squyers, and many other tables dressed to suppe who wolde; there was none shulde speke to hym at his table, but if he were called; his meate was the lyghtlye wylde foule, the legges and wynges alonely, and in the day he dyd but lytell eate and drike; he had great pleasure in armony of instrumetes; he coulde do it right well hymselfe; he wolde haue songes song before him; he wolde gladlye se conseytes and fantesies at his table, and when he had sene it, than he wolde sende it to ye other tables.

"Or I came to his court I had ben in many courtes of kynges, dukes, princes, erles, and great ladyes, but I was neuer in none y^t^ so well liked me, nor ther was none more rejoysed in deedes of armes than therle dyde; there was seen in his hall, chambre, and court, knyghtes and squyers of honour, talkyng of arms and of amours; all honour there was founde all maner of tydynges of euery realme and countrye there might be herde, for out of euery contre there was resort, for the valyantesse of this erle."

But even this glorious paradise of knights, lords, and fair ladies had a serpent at its heart. There was a skeleton of very substantial dimensions in the closet of the good "erle's" chamber.

Our chronicler handles it very tenderly and cautiously, with infinite regard for the feelings of his patron, but as faithful historian he cannot resist letting us know that the skeleton did exist, for a little later in the chapter he tells us, "True that

therle of Foiz and my lady of Foiz his wife agreeth nat wall to guyder nor have nat done of a long season!"

But we will not repeat the harrowing details of the domestic tragedy which wrecked the life of the hapless Lady of Foiz, nor disturb the repose of that skeleton which long since has crumbled into dust; yet we hope that a reader here and there may be interested to turn from Dumas Père and read for himself Lord Berners' naïve translation of the gay, kindly, light-hearted chronicler and glorifier of his century, drawing inspiration "from wells of English pure and undefiled," and supplementing with Froissard's Chronicle this Tale of long ago!

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LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1361.

DON PEDRO, King of Castile.
BLANCHE OF BOURBON, Queen of Castile.
DOÑA MARIA PADILLA, Don Pedro's mistress.
DON FREDERIC, Grand Master of St. James of Calatrava, } Don Pedro's half-brothers.
DON HENRY DE TRASTAMARE, }
DON TELLO, } brothers of Don Henry de Trastamare.
DON SANCHO, }
THE PRINCESS JUANA OF CASTILE, wife of Don Henry de Trastamare.
MOTHRIL, a Moor, minister to Don Pedro.
AÎSSA, his ward, in love with Agénor de Mauléon.
HASSAN, }
HAFIZ, } Moors, in the service of Mothril.
KEBIR, }
FERNANDO, a page to Don Frederic.
RAMON, a cross-bowman, in Don Frederic's service.
GILDAZ, in the service of Doña Maria Padilla.
THE PRINCE OF BENNEMARINE, }
DON RODRIGO DE SANATRIAS, } officers of Don Pedro's army.
CHARLES V., King of France.
BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN, constable of the kingdom.
TIPHAINE RAGUENEL, wife of Bertrand du Guesclin.
ERNAUTON DE SAINTE-COLOMBE.
AGÉNOR DE MAULÉON, a French knight, his adopted son.
MUSARON, squire to the Knight of Mauléon.
MENGEANT DE SAINT-BAZILE.

The Seneschal of Maine.
Perajo, a servant of Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe.
Le Bègue de Vilaine, commanding Breton troops under Du Guesclin.
Olivier de Mauny.
Maréchal d'Andreghem.
Olivier Du Guesclin, the constable's brother.
M. Carlonnet.
La Houssaie.
Comte de Montfort, } nobles of Bretagne.
Comte de Laval, }
Comte de la Marché, a French nobleman.
Edward, the Black Prince.
Sir John Chandos, } officers of the English army.
The Duke of Lancaster, }
Jean de Grailly, the Captal of Buch, serving with the Black Prince.
Pope Urban V.
Abbot Angelo Grinvald, his brother.
The Pope's Legate.
Messire Hugues de Caverley, } leaders of the Free Companies.
The Green Knight, }
Claude the Plunderer, }
Maître Robert, Caverley's secretary.
Lesby, }
Becker, } of Caverley's troop.
Philips, }
The Nurse of Doña Maria Padilla.
The Nurse of Blanche de Bourbon.
A Doctor at the Court of Charles V.
An Executioner.
Maître Jehan Froissard.
Sire Espaing de Lyon.
Master Barnabas, the host of the Star.
Mariton, his cook.
Marion, } servants at the Star.
Brin d'Avoine. }

AGÉNOR DE MAULÉON.

I.

HOW MASTER JEHAN FROISSARD BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THE HISTORY WE ARE ABOUT TO RELATE.

THE traveller who to-day passes through that part of Bigorre which lies between the sources of the Gers and the Adour, now the Department of Les Hautes-Pyrénées, can avail himself of two routes in making his way from Tournai to Tarbes: the first, of modern construction, crosses the plain, and will conduct him in two hours to the ancient capital of the Counts of Bigorre; the other, an old Roman road following the mountains, offers him a journey of nine leagues. But though this roundabout route may fatigue him, the charming country through which he travels will reward him well, for the magnificent view of Bagnères, of Montgaillard, of Lourdes, meets his gaze for the first time, with the vast Pyrenees bounding the horizon like a blue wall, while in their midst, white with snow, rises Pic-du-Midi, in all its graciousness. Upon this route, the favorite one of artists and poets and antiquarians, we beg the reader to look for a moment.

Early in the month of March, 1388, in the beginning of the reign of Charles VI., when those castles, to-day

levelled to the ground, lifted their pinnacled towers proudly above the tops of the tallest oaks and the loftiest pine-trees, in the days when those men of iron mail and hearts of bronze, Olivier de Clisson, Bertrand Du Guesclin, and the Captal of Buch, were scarcely at rest in their Homeric tombs, having only begun that great Iliad whose ending was to be the work of a simple shepherdess, — then it was that two men were riding along that narrow and rugged road which was at the time the only means of communication between the principal towns of the South.

They were followed by two servants, on horseback like their masters. The latter appeared to be nearly of an age, from fifty-five to fifty-eight years, but there all comparison ended, for the great difference in their costumes indicated that each followed a different profession.

The first, doubtless accustomed to lead, rode in advance of the other by half his horse's length. He was clad in a velvet surcoat which had once been crimson, but had lost both lustre and color, through frequent exposure to sun and rain, since the day when its master had worn it for the first time. Through its openings appeared two nervous arms covered with buff-skin sleeves, forming part of a doublet which had lost its first freshness, not merely through contact with the elements, but by constant rubbing against his cuirass, for which it had evidently been intended to serve as a lining. A helmet of the sort known as a basinet had been removed for a time, doubtless on account of the heat, and was attached to the knight's saddle-bow, so that his entire head was seen, shaven on top but shaded on the temples and behind the ears with long grizzled locks that harmonized well with the moustache, somewhat darker than the locks, as is

nearly always the case with those that have endured great fatigue; his beard, of the same color as the moustache, was square cut, and fell below his iron gorget, the only piece of defensive armor which the knight had not removed. His offensive weapons were a long sword attached to a leathern belt, and a small axe terminated by a triangular blade so fashioned that a blow of equal force could be struck with either the point or the edge. This axe, attached to the saddle-bow on the right, was a companion-piece to the helmet attached to the saddle-bow on the left.

Unlike the first knight, the second, who rode always in the rear of the other, wore neither the garb nor the mien of a warrior. He was clad in a black robe, at whose girdle hung neither sword nor poniard, but an ink-horn of shagreen, such as students and scholars carried in those days. Beneath his thick-set brows gleamed a pair of keen and intelligent eyes; his nose was somewhat curved at its extremity, his lips rather large; his locks were spare and short, and he wore neither moustache nor beard. On his head was a hood such as was then worn by magistrates, clerks, and other solemn functionaries of importance. From his pockets appeared rolls of parchment covered with the fine close handwriting habitual to those who write much. And even his horse seemed to share the peaceful tastes of its rider, and its pace was a modest and submissive amble, its head inclined towards the ground, a strong contrast to the war-horse whose high step, steaming nostrils, and capricious rearings bespoke all the pride and superiority of accustomed leadership.

The two servants followed, and their appearance was in keeping with their masters'. One was clad in green, after the fashion of the English archers; over his shoulder was slung a bow similar to theirs, his quiver on the

right side, while on the left, strapped lightly to his thigh was a species of poniard with a large blade, which resembled the short sword and also that terrible weapon known as a *langue-de-bœuf*.

Behind him, at each high step of his horse, was heard the clangor of his master's armor, which the security of the road had permitted him to remove for a time.

The other servant, like his master, was clad in black; upon his head was a black calotte with earlaps, and when he removed it, his tonsure, as well as the fashion in which his locks were cut, seemed to indicate that he belonged to one of the lower orders of the clergy, an impression that was confirmed at sight of the missal which he carried under his arm, whose corners and fastenings, a beautiful specimen of the silversmith's art, were still bright despite the well-thumbed binding.

All continued on their way, the servants chattering, their masters musing, till they came to a spot where the main road divided in three directions. Here the knight in advance of the other checked his horse, and motioning to his companion to do likewise, he observed, —

"Now, Maître Jehan, look well at the country around you, and tell me what you think of it."

His companion, in response to this invitation, glanced about him, and as the country appeared to be quite deserted, and the lay of the land favorable to an ambush, he replied, —

"By my faith, Sire Espaing, 't is a strange spot, and for my part I declare that I would not pause here long enough even to repeat three *paters* or three *aves*, were I not in the company of so renowned a knight as yourself."

"I thank you for the compliment, Sire Jehan, and therein I recognize your customary courtesy; but now recall what you yourself said to me three days ago, as we

were leaving the town of Pamiers, concerning that famous skirmish between Mengeant de Saint-Bazile and Ernauton-Bissette at the Pass of Larre."

"Yes, I remember," answered the ecclesiastic, "I asked you to inform me when we reached the Pass of Larre, for I would see the spot made famous by the death of so many brave men."

"Well, it lies before you, messire."

"I thought that the Pass of Larre was in Bigorre."

"And so it is, messire, and so are we, and we have been ever since we forded the little river of Lèze. We left behind us, almost a quarter of an hour ago, on our left, the road of Lourdes and the château of Montgaillard. There is the little village of Civitat; there is the forest of the Lord of Barbezan, and beneath, across the woods, is the château of Marcheras."

"Indeed! Messire Espaing," said the ecclesiastic, "you know my curiosity concerning valorous deeds, and that it has been my habit to record whatever I have witnessed, as well as those which have been related to me, that the memory of them may not be lost. Relate to me, if you will, what happened at this spot."

"'T is easily done," said the knight. "Towards 1358 or 1359, about thirty years ago, all the garrisons of the country were French except that of Lourdes. Now this one, when supplies of food fell short, made frequent sorties, raiding the town, taking all that came its way, and driving everything before it back to the fort; and with such success that as often as it was known that this garrison was raiding the country, all the others sent detachments into the field, and gave chase, and when there was an encounter, there were some terrible combats, where were performed feats of arms as famous as any ever heard of in pitched battle.

"One day Mengeant de Saint-Bazile, so called because it was his habit to entrap the enemy in the disguise of a monk, left Lourdes with the Lord of Carnillac and about one hundred and twenty lances, for the citadel was in need of provisions, and a great expedition had been resolved upon. On they rode, till in a field about a league's distance from Toulouse they found a drove of oxen which they seized, and started out to return on the shortest road; but instead of following the road prudently, they turned first to the right and then to the left, to capture a herd of swine and a flock of sheep which they encountered; meanwhile the rumor of their expedition had spread through the country.

"The first who knew of it was a captain of Tarbes, by name Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe. In defence of his castle he left his nephew, or, as some say, a natural son of his; the youth was a young page of fifteen or sixteen years, who had never taken part in a single combat or even a skirmish. The captain hastened to warn the Lord of Berrac, the Lord of Barbezan, and all the squires of Bigorre whom he encountered, so that the same evening he found himself at the head of a force nearly equal to that of Mengeant de Saint-Bazile, and he assumed entire control of it.

"He at once sent spies through the country to discover what road the garrison at Lourdes would take, and when he learned that it must go by the Pass of Larre he resolved to await it there. Consequently, as he knew the country perfectly, and his horses were not tired, while the enemy's had been on the road for four days, he hastened to take position, while the marauders halted about three leagues from the spot where he awaited them.

"As you yourself have remarked, the place is a favorable one for an ambuscade. The men of Lourdes and the

monk himself suspected nothing; and as the cattle were ahead, they had already passed the spot where we now are, when the troops of Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe, at full gallop, and uttering loud cries, approached by the two roads you see yonder, the one on the right, the other on the left. They soon discovered with whom they had to deal, for the monk was not the man to retreat; he ordered his men to halt, and awaited the shock.

"It was a terrible one, as was to be expected when the combatants were the bravest warriors in the land. But what made the men of Lourdes most furious was that they were separated from the cattle, for whose capture they had undergone such fatigue and braved so many dangers. They saw their bellowing, lowing, bleating prisoners running away under the safe conduct of their enemy's serving-men, who, thanks to the barrier interposed by their masters, had to face no enemy more dangerous than the drivers, and these were not fighting men, for what mattered it to them whether their herds belonged to one party or the other, after they had passed out of their keeping?

"The men of Lourdes had, therefore, a twofold interest in conquering their enemies. They had first to secure their own safety, and then regain their cattle, of which they knew that their comrades in the citadel were in great need.

"First they fought with lances, but very soon many of them were broken, and those whose lances still remained, finding that this weapon was of small use in so confined a space, threw their lances aside, some seizing clubs, some their axes, others their swords, and others any weapon at hand. A general mêlée began, so stubborn and grim, so fierce and terrible, that the contestants on either side would not yield one inch of the soil. Those who fell

sought death, that they need not live to own that the field was lost; and so the battle raged for three hours, when, with one accord, those who were too weary to strive longer retired and seated themselves behind their companions, some in the woods or in the field, others at the mouth of a ditch. They removed their helmets, wiping away the blood and sweat; they breathed freely for a few moments, and then returned to the fray, more terrible than before. So well they fought that I doubt whether there ever has been a braver attack, a braver defence, since the famous combat of the Thirty.

"Now during all this time it had chanced that the two leaders, Mengeant de Saint-Bazile and Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe, had battled, one on the left, the other on the right; but both, plunging into the thickest of the battle, wielded such mighty blows that the crowd was compelled to give way to him, and at last they found themselves face to face. Now as this was the dearest desire of both, and they had not ceased to challenge each other since the beginning of the battle, each uttered a cry of joy on perceiving the other, and as their men knew that this combat would be so valorous as to efface the memory of all that had gone before on that day, they drew back, ceded the ground to their leaders, and the general engagement ceased for a while to give way to this special encounter."

"Ah," said the ecclesiastic, interrupting the knight with a sigh, "what would I not give to have witnessed such a joust, which would have recalled the fair days of chivalry, gone, alas, never to return —"

"And indeed, Messire Jehan," answered the other, "you would have witnessed a wonderful, a glorious sight, for both combatants were warriors, puissant in frame, skilled at their craft; each was mounted upon a noble and

mettlesome steed, who seemed to share his master's fury. Now the monk's horse fell at the first stroke of Ernauton's axe, receiving the blow destined for his master, and lay dead upon the ground. But rapid though the blow had been, the monk extricated his feet from the saddle in such a fashion that he found himself lying, not under his horse, but at its side. Extending his arm, he hamstrung Ernauton's steed, which neighed with pain, weakened, and fell upon its knees. Ernauton lost the advantage he had gained, and was forced in his turn to leap to the ground. Scarcely had he done so, when the monk was on his feet again, and the battle began once more, Ernauton striking with his hatchet, and the monk with his club."

"And it was at this very spot that this exploit happened?" asked the ecclesiastic, his eyes sparkling with enthusiasm, as if he himself had witnessed the combat which had been described to him.

"On this very spot, Messire Jehan. And ten times at least, eye-witnesses have told to me that which I have related to you. Ernauton's position was where you are now standing, the monk stood where I stand, and Ernauton was so hard pressed that, though still defending himself, he was compelled to recede somewhat, and, still fighting, he retreated from his position near that stone, which is between your horse's legs, to the ditch itself, into which he would certainly have fallen backwards, had it not been that at this very moment a young man, who had arrived quite out of breath during the combat, and who had been watching from the other side of the trench, seeing the brave knight in such a strait, and that his strength was almost spent, cleared with a single bound the space that separated him from Ernauton, and snatching the axe from the hands which were almost ready to let it fall, he said,—

" 'Ah, dear uncle, give me this axe for a little while, and let me try my hand!'

" Ernauton asked nothing better, and relinquished the axe. He lay stretched at the edge of the ditch, where his serving-men hastened to his aid, and began to unlace him, for he seemed about to give up the ghost."

" But the young man," asked the churchman,—" what of the young man?"

" Well, the young man discovered that, whether or not bastard as he was called, the warm blood of his race flowed in his veins, and his uncle had been unwise to leave him shut up in an old castle instead of taking him with himself; for scarcely was the axe in his hand when, no whit disturbed that he wore but a simple cloth doublet, and on his head no other covering than a velvet bonnet, with the edge of his axe he struck out at his adversary, who was in complete armor, and struck so rude a blow at the top of his helmet that the basinet was cut, and the monk, quite stunned, staggered and almost fell. But he was too hardy a soldier to yield at the first blow. He stood upon his feet again, and aimed at the youth such a blow as would certainly have broken his head if it had not missed him; but the latter, who was not weighed down by any defensive armor, avoided the stroke with a swift bound to one side, and springing upon his adversary, elastic and nimble as a young tiger, he encompassed with his two arms the monk, wearied with his long struggle, and bending him as the wind sways a tree, ended by throwing him, and planting himself above him cried, 'Surrender, Mengeant de Saint-Bazile, else, succor or no succor, you are a dead man.'"

" And did he surrender?" demanded the ecclesiastic, who took so great an interest in this relation that his limbs quivered with delight.

"Not at all," continued the other; "but he answered him fairly and squarely: '*I* surrender to a boy? I would scorn to do so! Strike, if you will.'

"'Then if you will not yield to me, surrender to my uncle, Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe, who is a brave knight, no boy like myself.'

"'No sooner to your uncle than to you,' answered the monk, as one who will not hear, 'for, had you not come, your uncle would be lying where I am now. Strike, then. Under no pretext will I yield.'

"'In that case,' said the youth, 'and since you will not surrender absolutely, wait and you shall see.'

"'Yes, we shall see,' said the monk, roused to a last effort, like that of the giant Enceladus when he desired to free himself of Mount Etna; 'yes, we shall see.'

"But it was all in vain that he attempted to regain his force, and strove to envelop the young man with his arms and legs as if they were rings of iron. The boy lost no advantage that he had gained. He remained victor, holding his adversary under him with one hand, while with the other he drew from his girdle a small knife, long and sharp. It glided into the gorget of the knight. At the same moment was heard a dull death-rattle. The monk moved, raised himself, but was powerless to throw off the young man whose knife still pressed into his gorget. Suddenly a stream of blood gushed across the visor of the monk's helmet, and his adversary's face became as marble. Upon these almost superhuman efforts was stamped the agony of death, but the young man had not left his enemy for a moment from the beginning of the struggle, and he did not leave him now. He seemed a part of those awful movements. As a serpent coils itself about the body of its victim which it crushes to death, so he rose and sank, stiffened

his limbs, as the other did, and shuddered with him, lay stretched upon the ground with him, and remained motionless until the last quiver of the muscles had ceased, and the death-rattle became a sigh.

"Then he rose, wiped his face upon the sleeve of his doublet, and with the other hand shook the drops from his knife, the weapon which, though it seemed the mere plaything of a child, had been such a terrible instrument of death."

"*Vrai Dieu!*" exclaimed the ecclesiastic, almost betrayed into an oath by his enthusiasm, "surely, Sire Espaing de Lyon, you will tell me the name of this young man that I may record it upon my tablets, and endeavor to engrave it upon the book of history!"

"He was called the Bastard of Mauléon," answered the knight; "and as you say, Messire Jehan, you will do well to inscribe his name in full upon your tablets, for 't is the name of a mighty warrior, and merits well this distinction."

"But," said the priest, "his career did not end with that wonderful combat. Surely there were later exploits worthy of that with which he began?"

"Indeed, yes; for, three or four years afterwards, he departed for Spain, where he lived four or five years, fighting the Moors and the Saracens, returning without his right hand."

"Alas," exclaimed the ecclesiastic, in a tone which indicated how keenly his sympathies were stirred by this mishap of the boy who had vanquished the monk of Saint-Bazile, "what a misfortune! for doubtless, though a brave knight, he was obliged to renounce a soldier's life."

"By no means," replied Messire Espaing de Lyon. "By no means. You are mistaken, Messire Jehan. Quite

the contrary, for in place of the hand which he had lost, he caused to be made an iron hand with which he could hold a lance as well as though it had been a real one, to say nothing of the fact that if it suited him he could use this hand as a war club, striking with it in such a fashion that whoever received a blow did not soon recover."

"And may one ask," demanded the ecclesiastic, "how he lost his hand?"

"Ah," said Messire Espaing, "that is just what I am unable to tell you, though I would be most glad to please you, for I do not know personally the brave knight concerning whom you put this question, and even those who know him have assured me that they are in ignorance about this portion of his history, for he has never been willing to relate it to any one."

"Then," answered the ecclesiastic, "I will say nothing of your Bastard of Mauléon, messire, for I would not wish that those who shall read the history which I write, should put the same question as I, and receive no answer."

"By Our Lady!" said Messire Espaing, "I will inquire, I will discover; but you might as well give up hope from the first, Master Jehan, for I doubt whether you will ever know that which you are so desirous of learning, unless from the knight himself, should you ever meet him, which is no likely matter."

"Is he still alive?"

"Certainly, and more redoubtable than ever before."

"With his iron hand?"

"With his iron hand."

"Ah," said Messire Jehan, "I verily believe I would give my abbey to meet this man, and to hear him relate his history with his own lips; but finish your account

of the skirmish, Messire Espaing, and tell me what became of both sides after the monk's death."

"The death of the monk ended the battle. That which the knights desired, their lost cattle, they obtained again. Moreover, the monk dead, they knew that the terrible garrison at Lourdes, once so formidable, was not to be feared half as much; for it is frequently a single man who makes the strength of a garrison or an army. It was decided that each side should be allowed to remove its prisoners and wounded, and the dead they buried.

"So they bore away the body of Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe, who by this time was nearly dead with his wounds. They interred the dead where we are now, on the very spot where our horses are pawing the ground; and that so brave an adversary as Ernauton's need not lie in the common grave, they dug a trench on the other side of this large stone which you see a few steps away, placed above it a stone cross, with his name inscribed, so that all pilgrims, travellers, valiant and puissant knights might breathe, in passing, a prayer for the repose of his soul."

"Let us approach this cross then, Messire Espaing," responded the abbot, "and, for my part, I will say with all my heart a *paternoster*, an *ave*, and a *de profundis*."

Then himself setting an example to the knight, the abbot motioned the squires to approach, tossed the bridle of his horse into the hands of his serving-man, and dismounted, with an impatience which indicated that when engaged in such an affair, the years of the good chronicler weighed but lightly upon him.

Messire Espaing de Lyon did likewise, and both made their way on foot towards the spot indicated; but

before passing the stone, both paused. A knight, of whose presence they had not before been aware, was kneeling before the cross, enveloped in a large mantle, whose stiff folds indicated that they concealed a suit of complete armor. Only his head remained uncovered. His helmet lay upon the ground, while hidden also by the stone and scarcely ten paces behind him was his squire armed as a warrior, seated upon a battle-horse, and holding in check his master's horse equipped with all the trappings of war.

The knight was a man in the full prime of life, that is to say, between forty-six and forty-eight years of age. His skin was bronzed as a Moor's, his locks and beard were thick, and black as a crow's wing. Sire Espaing and the abbot paused for a moment to observe this man, who, motionless, and like a statue in appearance, was performing at the grave of the monk that pious duty which they themselves had been about to fulfil. On his side the stranger knight paid not the slightest attention to the new-comers, while he continued his prayer; but when that was finished, to the great astonishment of his two assistants, he made the sign of the cross with his left hand, saluting them with a courteous inclination of the head, placed his helmet once more upon his bronzed face, and wrapped still in his mantle, remounted, turned the angle near the stone, followed by his squire, more rigid, leaner, swarthier than himself, and vanished.

Although it was not unusual to meet figures of this sort in the period of which we are writing, the one they had just encountered was so striking that the travellers remarked him closely, but each one to himself, for they began to be pressed for time. They had still three leagues to journey, and moreover the ecclesiastic had

engaged to repeat a *paternoster* and an *ave*, a *de profundis et fidelium* at the monk's tomb.

The prayer ended, Messire Jehan looked about him. The knight, who doubtless did not know a longer prayer, had left him alone. He then made in his turn the sign of the cross, but with the right hand, and joined his companion again.

He asked of the two servants, "Have you seen an armed knight, followed by his squire? The knight may have been forty-six years old; the squire from fifty-five to sixty."

"I have already asked them, messire," said Espaing de Lyon, with an inclination of the head. His mind appeared as absorbed with one idea as that of the companion of his travels. "It seems that his journey lies upon the same road as ours, and like us he will doubtless rest for the night at Tarbes."

"Let us put our horses to a trot and overtake him if it please you, Messire Espaing," said the chronicler; "for if we meet him again, possibly he will speak to us, as is the custom of fellow-travellers, and methinks there might be much to learn in the company of one who has seen a sun hot enough to have burnt him to such a brown."

"As you will, messire," answered the knight, "for I confess to you, I am seized with a curiosity not less lively than your own; though I am of these parts, I cannot remember that I have ever seen this face before."

Following their resolve, our two travellers hastened their pace, continuing at the same distance apart, the knight's horse always slightly in advance of the ecclesiastic's.

But all in vain they spurred on their horses. The road, becoming better and wider after it crossed the

Lèze river, had afforded the stranger and his squire an equal opportunity for speed, and the curiosity of the knight and his companion brought them to the gates of Tarbes, without their overtaking the travellers.

Once arrived at Tarbes, the good abbot's mind was again preoccupied with a more serious matter.

"Messire," he said to the knight, "you know that the traveller's first need is a good lodging and a good supper. Tell me, pray, where we can find lodging in this town of Tarbes, where I know no one, being a new-comer, summoned as you know by my Lord Gaston Phœbus."

"Be not disturbed, messire," said the knight smiling, "an it please you, we will lodge at the Star. 'T is the best hostelry in the town, to say nothing of the fact that its host is one of my friends."

"Excellent," said the chronicler. "I have often observed that in travelling there are two sorts of men whom it is well to have as friends, — common thieves and highwaymen; in other words, innkeepers and robbers. Let us repair then to your friend, the host of the Star, and you shall commend me to his care for my return journey."

Both went on their way towards the hostelry, which was in the public square of the town, and, as Messire Espaing de Lyon had said, was famous for many a league around.

The host was at the entrance of the inn, upon the steps, and he had condescended to lay aside his usual aristocratic manners for the time, and was plucking a magnificent cock-pheasant of all save the head and tail-feathers, which he allowed to remain, through that gastronomic scruple that can be appreciated only by gourmands, who enjoy not merely through tasting and

smelling, but also through seeing. However, before he became thoroughly absorbed in this important occupation, he caught sight of Messire Espaing de Lyon the moment he appeared upon the scene, and placing his pheasant under his left arm, while he took his bonnet in his right hand, he stepped forward to meet him.

"Ah, it is you, Messire Espaing," he said, manifesting the liveliest joy at sight of the other. "You are most welcome, you and your illustrious company. 'T is long since I have seen you, and I felt sure you could hardly delay much longer to pass through our town. Here! Brin-d'Avoine, come and take these gentlemen's horses. Ho! Marion, prepare the best chambers. Dismount, gentlemen, if you please, and honor my humble hostelry with your presence."

"Did I not speak well?" asked the knight of his companion, "when I told you, Messire Jehan, that Master Barnabas is a worthy fellow, in whose quarters one can find at a moment's notice everything of which he has need?"

"Yes," said the ecclesiastic, "I have nothing to say in reply but this: I have heard mention of stables and sleeping-rooms, but nothing was said about supper."

"Oh! as to supper, let your lordships rest assured," said the host. "Messire Espaing will tell you that the only fault I have ever been charged with is that of overfeeding my guests."

"Come, come, my good gascon," replied Messire Espaing, who had alighted with his companion, and had tossed his horse's bridle into the hands of the servants, "show us the way, and if only you give us half of all that you promise, we shall be satisfied."

"Half?" exclaimed Master Barnabas, "half? but my reputation as a man would be lost if that were all.

Twice as much as I promise, Messire Espaing, twice as much!"

The knight cast a satisfied glance towards the churchman, and both, following the lead of the innkeeper, entered the kitchen.

In fact, in this delightful kitchen, everything gave a foretaste of that bliss which every true gourmand feels after a well-ordered and well-served repast. The spit was turning, the pots were singing, the gridirons were hissing, and in the midst of all this noise, as if in harmonious summons to the table, the clock struck six.

The knight rubbed his hands, and the chronicler smacked his lips. Chroniclers are epicures in general, and it is still worse when they are not only chroniclers, but churchmen as well.

Just then, and starting from the same point, the spit, the eyes of both traversed a circular line, in opposite directions, that they might be assured that these promised joys were real, and could not elude them, like those fantastic feasts promised by wicked enchanters to knights-errant in days of old. A groom, on his rounds, entered the kitchen, and whispered a word in the ear of the innkeeper.

"The devil!" exclaimed the latter, scratching his ear, "and you say that there is no room for these gentlemen's horses?"

"None whatever, master. The knight who arrived just before they did, took the two stalls that remained, not in the stable but in the shed."

"Oh!" observed Messire Espaing, "we are sorry to be separated from our horses, but if you have no room for them here, that we need not lose the chambers you promised us, we will allow our horses to go

with the servants to some neighboring place in the town."

"In that case," said Master Barnabas, "I know what I can do for you, and your horses will lose nothing through the change, for they shall be lodged in such stables that the Count of Foix himself has no finer!"

"Take them then to these magnificent stables," said Messire Espaing. "But they must be at the door at six in the morning, and ready to set out, for we are going, Messire Jehan and I, to the town of Pau, where Monseigneur Gaston Phœbus awaits us."

"Rest assured," answered Master Barnabas, "depend upon my word."

At this moment the chambermaid entered on her rounds, and spoke in a low tone to the innkeeper, whose face suddenly assumed an expression of great annoyance.

"Well, what 's the matter now?" demanded Messire Espaing.

"It cannot be possible!" answered the innkeeper, and he inclined his ear once more that the chambermaid might repeat her words.

"What does she say?" asked the knight.

"A thing that does not seem possible."

"But what?"

"She says our rooms are all taken."

"Oh, very well!" said Messire Jehan. "Then we are condemned to pass the night with our horses."

"Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen, nothing but excuses!" exclaimed Master Barnabas. "But the knight who came just a little before you did has taken the only two remaining chambers for his squire and himself!"

"Bah!" said Messire Jehan, who appeared quite accustomed to such disappointments, "an uncomfortable night is soon passed if we have eaten a good supper."

"Wait!" said the innkeeeper; "here 's the head cook whom I must speak with a moment."

The cook drew the innkeeper aside, and a whispered conversation began.

"Oh!" exclaimed the host, growing as pale as it was possible for him to become, "oh, this is impossible!"

But the other made a gesture with his head and both hands, which said plainly as words, "It is as I tell you."

The ecclesiastic, who seemed to understand the vocabulary of signs perfectly when it appertained to matters relating to the stomach, really grew pale.

"How now?" he asked; "*what* is as he tells you?"

"Gentlemen," answered the host, "Mariton must be mistaken."

"How so?"

"He informs me there is nothing left for you to sup upon, because the rest of our provisions are bespoken for the knight who came just before you."

"Have a care, Master Barnabas!" said Messire Espaing de Lyon with a frown. "No more jests if you please!"

"Alas, messire," said the other, "I beg you to believe I do not jest, and would not for the world, and my grief is I cannot say how great at the mishap which has befallen you."

"I will accept what you have said about the stable and the bedchambers," answered the knight, "but as concerns supper, that is another matter, and I will not give in as beaten. There 's a whole row of stewpans!"

"But their contents, messire, are destined for the Castellan of Marcheras, who is here with his lady."

"And that fat fowl that is turning on the spit?"

"Bespoken for a rich canon of Carcassonne, who is

returning to his chapter, and has only one feast-day a week."

"And that gridiron full of cutlets whose odor is so savory?"

"That, with the fowl I am plucking, is for the knight who came just a moment before you."

"Ah, well!" exclaimed Messire Espaing, "it seems that this devil of a knight has taken everything. Now, Master Barnabas, do me the favor of waiting upon him, and say to him that a knight who has not yet broken his fast, proposes to break a lance with him, not on account of the bright eyes of his lady, but because of the savory odor of his supper; and you may add that Master Jehan Froissard, the chronicler, himself will judge the combat and record our deeds."

"There is no need of that, messire," said a voice behind Master Barnabas, "for I come in behalf of my master to invite you, Messire Espaing de Lyon, and you, Messire Jehan Froissard, to sup with him."

Messire Espaing turned around, hearing the voice, and recognized the squire of the strange knight.

"Oh, oh!" said he. "'T is a most courteous invitation; what say you, Messire Jehan?"

"Not merely that 't is most courteous, but also a most timely one."

"And what is the name of your master, that we may know to whom we are indebted for such civility?"

"He will tell you himself, if you will follow me," responded the squire.

The two travellers gazed at each other, and partly through hunger, partly through curiosity, both felt the same desire.

"Let us go," they said with one voice. "Show us the way and we will follow you."

Both mounted the stairway after the squire, who opened the door of a chamber, in the centre of which sat the strange knight, relieved of his armor, and clad in a black velvet robe with long, large sleeves. His hands were behind his back. Perceiving them, he went forward a few steps and saluted them courteously.

"Most welcome, messeigneurs!" he said, extending his left hand; "and receive the thanks which I owe you for the willingness with which you have accepted my invitation."

The manner of the knight was so frank and friendly, the hand he offered them was so freely given, that both accepted it, although it was the invariable custom among knights to present the right hand, and it was considered almost as an insult to do otherwise.

Meanwhile both travellers, while acknowledging this singular courtesy, could not master their astonishment sufficiently to prevent its being read in their faces, but the knight apparently was unobservant of this fact.

"It is we who owe you our thanks, messire," said Froissard, "for we were in some perplexity, from which your gracious invitation has rescued us. Receive our deepest thanks."

"I will add," replied the knight, "that I have two chambers, and you may have one of them. I will give you the one intended for my squire."

"Indeed," said Espaing de Lyon, "this is too much kindness. Where then will your squire sleep?"

"*Pardieu!* in my own chamber."

"No," said Froissard, "to permit this would impose upon —"

"Bah!" replied the unknown knight, "we are used to that! It is more than twenty-five years since we first slept under the same tent, and since then it has hap-

pened so often that we have ceased to count the times; but be seated, messeigneurs."

And the knight pointed towards some chairs placed around a table, upon which were glasses and a tankard, and setting the example, seated himself, the two travellers following in their turn.

"Then the matter is decided," said the stranger, filling three glasses with hippocrass, and making use of his left hand for this act, as he had done previously.

"By my faith, yes," said Espaing de Lyon, "and it would ill repay you to refuse so cordial an offer. Are you not of my opinion, Messire Jehan?"

"All the more so, as the inconvenience we shall cause you will not be of long duration," answered the treasurer of Chimay.

"How is that?" asked the strange knight.

"We leave to-morrow for Pau."

"'T is easier to know when we have reached a place than to say when we shall leave it," observed the knight.

"We are expected by Count Gaston Phœbus."

"And is there no matter of sufficient interest to detain you a week on the way?" asked the knight.

"Nothing unless, indeed, it were some curious and interesting history," said Espaing de Lyon.

"And even then," said the chronicler, "I doubt whether I could break my promise given to Monseigneur le Comte de Foix."

"Messire Jehan Froissard," replied the nameless knight, "you as much as said, at the Pass of Larre, that you would gladly give your abbey of Chimay to him who would relate you the adventures of the Bastard of Mauléon."

"Well, now! I said that. But how do you know?"

"You forget that I was saying an *ave* at the monk's tomb, and that where I was, I could hear every word that was uttered."

"Ah, see, what it is to speak in open air, Messire Jehan Froissard," said Espaing de Lyon, smiling. "Those words of yours will cost you your abbey."

"By the mass, sir knight," answered Froissard, "I own I am fairly caught, and I suspect that you know this history."

"You are not mistaken," said the knight. "No one knows it better; no one can relate it to you better than I."

"From the time when he slew the monk of Lourdes to the time when he lost his hand?" asked Espaing de Lyon.

"Yes."

"And what will it cost me?" said Froissard, who, in spite of his curiosity to hear the narration, began to regret that he had promised his abbey.

"It will cost you a week, Messire Abbé," answered the unknown knight; "and it will be a mighty labor, if in that week you have time to inscribe upon parchment all I shall tell you."

"I understood," said Froissard, "that the Bastard of Mauléon had sworn never to reveal his history."

"Not until he should find a chronicler worthy of writing it, and now, Messire Jehan, there is no longer any reason for concealing it."

"In that case," asked Froissard, "why do you not write it yourself?"

"Because of a serious hindrance I have here," said the knight with a smile.

"And what may it be?" asked Messire Espaing de Lyon.

"This!" replied the knight, raising the sleeve of his right hand with the left, and placing upon the table a mutilated arm terminated by iron pincers.

"Jésu!" exclaimed Froissard, trembling with joy. "Then you are —"

"The Bastard of Mauléon himself, whom some also name Agénor of the Iron Hand."

"And you will narrate to me your history?" demanded Froissard, still in suspense.

"As soon as we have supped," said the knight.

"Good!" said Froissard, rubbing his hands. "You said truly, Messire Espaing de Lyon, Monseigneur Gaston Phœbus will wait."

And the same evening, after supper, the Bastard of Mauléon fulfilled his promise, and began to narrate to Messire Jehan Froissard the history the reader is about to learn, which we have extracted from an unedited manuscript, according to our custom, giving ourselves no further trouble than that of putting in the third person a narration which was written in the first.

II.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULÉON MET, BETWEEN PINCHEL AND COIMBRA, A MOOR OF WHOM HE ASKED THE WAY, AND WHO PASSED HIM BY WITHOUT ANSWERING.

On a fine morning in the month of June, 1361, one who was not to be daunted by one hundred degrees of heat might have seen, advancing on the road between Pinchel and Coimbra, a figure whose features our readers of this generation will thank us for describing.

It did not seem like a man, but rather like a complete suit of armor, composed of a helmet, cuirass, armlets, and cuissarts, a targe around the neck, and crowning all a tuft of red plumes, above which the point of the lance appeared.

This armor was seated erect upon a horse, whose black legs and flaming eyes were all that was visible, for, like his master, he was hidden beneath his war-trappings, and covered with a white housing wrought with scarlet.

From time to time the noble animal tossed his head and neighed, more in anger than in pain, when some fly slipped under the folds of his heavy caparison, and let him feel its keen sting.

As for the knight, seated erect and rigid upon his horse, as if he were riveted to the saddle, he seemed to court the intense heat which descended from the coppery sky, scorching and withering the grass, and making the air itself seem on fire. No one could have been accused

of lack of hardihood, if he had permitted himself to raise the burning visor which had converted the interior of the helmet into a sweat-house; but from the impassive countenance and the brave immobility of the knight might be seen that, even in the desert, he desired to exhibit and to discipline the vigor of his frame and those powers of endurance which had inured him to the hardships of a military life.

We have called the country through which the knight was travelling a desert, and in fact it merited the name. It was a valley just deep enough to concentrate the most burning rays of the sun upon the road over which the knight was passing.

For more than two hours the heat had been so great that the most constant frequenters of the valley were no longer to be seen. The shepherds and their flocks, which reappeared at morning and evening on either slope, to seek a few crisp yellow blades of grass, had sought refuge behind the hedges or in the bushes, and were sleeping in the shade. As far as the eye could see, one would have sought in vain any traveller courageous enough or sufficiently insensible to the burning heat to tread that soil, which seemed to be composed of the mere cinders of rocks that had been calcined by the sun. The only living thing that proved it was possible to live in such a furnace was the locust, or rather, myriads of locusts, which, lodged between the stones, clinging to the grass blades, or spreading themselves upon some olive-branch white with dust, made that shrill, monotonous flourish of sound which was a triumphal chant as well, announcing that they were the conquerors of the desert, where they reigned in sole and matchless sovereignty.

We were over-hasty in our statement that one, glan-

cing across the horizon, would have sought vainly any other traveller than him we have already attempted to describe; for, a hundred paces behind him moved a second figure not less curious than the first, although of a totally different type. He was a man of thirty years, or thereabouts, lean, bent, bronzed. He was squatted rather than mounted upon a steed as lean as himself, sleeping in the saddle, where he was clinging with his hands, with none of those precautions which his watchful companion exercised. He did not even attempt to observe the road over which he was passing, apparently trusting himself to it as a thing far wiser than himself, and with far less object in losing itself.

Meanwhile the knight, doubtless wearied at last from bearing his lance so upright, and sitting so erect in the saddle, paused for a moment to raise his visor, and thus give egress to the steaming vapor which began to ascend from the iron covering about his head; but before executing this movement, he cast about him the glance of a man who does not consider that valor is any less estimable for being tempered somewhat with discretion. In this rotatory movement he caught sight of his careless companion, and, looking at him attentively, observed that he was asleep.

"Musaron!" cried the iron-incased knight, having first raised the visor of his helmet, "Musaron! awake, sluggard! or by the precious blood of Saint James, as the Spaniards say, you will never reach Coimbra with my baggage, for you will either lose it on the way, or thieves will carry it off! Musaron! still asleep, rascal!"

But the squire, for such was his relation to the knight who had just apostrophized him, was still in too deep a slumber to be awakened merely by the sound of a voice. The knight saw that he must employ some

more emphatic means of awakening him, the more so as the sleeper's horse, seeing that his master was resting, had decided that it was a good time for him also to come to a dead halt. All motion had now ceased for Musaron, which afforded him a better opportunity to enjoy a profound slumber. The knight detached from his belt a little ivory horn, crusted with silver, and putting it to his lips, blew vigorously two or three notes, causing his horse, as well as his companion's, to rear and neigh loudly.

This time Musaron was thoroughly startled and awake.

"Ho, there!" he cried, raising a sort of cutlass hanging to his girdle. "Ho, there! thieves! what do you want? What are you after, gypsies, grandchildren of the devil? back!" and the brave squire began to slash right and left, until, observing that he was belaboring only the air, he paused, and gazed at his master with an astonished face.

"Well, now, what is the matter, Messire Agénor?" he asked, both eyes wide open with astonishment. "Where are the men who were attacking us? Have they melted away like smoke, or did I destroy them in my sleep?"

"This is the matter!" answered the knight. "You were dreaming, and while you were dreaming you were allowing my shield to drag at the end of its leathern strap, which is dishonoring the arms of an honest knight. Come, come, or I will break my lance over your shoulders."

Musaron tossed his head somewhat saucily.

"By my faith, Sir Agénor," he said, "you will do well! and far from opposing your intention I beg of you to put it into execution, for then one lance at least would have been broken during our travels!"

"What say you, rascal?" exclaimed the knight.

"I say," continued the squire, approaching his master, and jesting heedlessly, "that for sixteen whole days we have been riding across Spain, this country which was to yield us so many adventures, so you said when we set out upon our travels, and thus far the only enemies we have encountered are the sun and the flies, and we have gathered nothing but blisters and dust. *Mordieu!* Sir Agénor, I am hungry! *Mordieu!* Sir Agénor, I am thirsty! *Mordieu!* Sir Agénor, my purse is empty! The three worst evils of this world prey upon me. And I have not yet seen any of those splendid chances to pillage infidel Moors, with which you feasted me, that pillaging that was to enrich our bodies and save our souls, and concerning which I dreamed many a bright dream over yonder in our fair country of Bigorre before I was your squire and even afterwards."

"Do you bewail your lot then, when I do not?"

"Indeed, I have good cause to, Sir Agénor, only the courage is lacking. Here our last coins have been expended upon those armorers at Pinchel, who have sharpened your axe, ground your sword, and furbished your armor. In truth, we need nothing now except an encounter with brigands."

"Coward!"

"Wait a moment, hear me out, Sir Agénor. I do not say that I fear them."

"What, then?"

"I desire to meet them."

"Why so?"

"That we may rob these same robbers," answered Musaron, with that sly smile which was the most striking feature of his physiognomy.

The knight raised his lance, apparently with every intention of letting it fall upon the shoulders of the squire, coming closer to him that he might essay this form of correction more successfully; but the latter, with a slight but adroit movement in which he seemed well-practised, dodged the blow, catching the lance by the hand.

"Take care, Sir Agénor," said he, "and do not jest thus, for my bones are hard, and there is but little flesh upon them. Some mischance might easily happen. A false stroke, and you would break your lance, and we should be obliged to replace it ourselves with a wooden one, and then we must needs present ourselves before Don Frederic in incomplete armor, which would be most humiliating to the honor of our Bearnese knighthood."

"Silence, accursed chatterer! or, if you must talk, you will do better to mount this hill and tell me what you see from the top."

"Ah," said Musaron, "it is surely that one unto which Satan transported our Saviour, and if I find any one at all at the top, it will be the devil himself, who may offer me all the kingdoms of the world for kissing his hoof."

"And will you accept them?"

"Gladly, sir knight."

"Musaron," answered the knight gravely, "jest about whatever else you will, but speak not lightly of holy things."

Musaron bowed his head. "Monseigneur," he said, "do you wish to know what can be seen from the top of this hill?"

"More than ever; hasten!"

Musaron made the ascent with ease, following a

roundabout path, and keeping always at safe distance from his master's lance. Reaching the top, he exclaimed, "Ah, *Jésus Dieu!* what do I see?"

And he crossed himself.

"Well, what *do* you see?" demanded the knight.

"A paradise on earth, where little is lacking," said Musaron, overwhelmed with admiration.

"Describe your paradise," responded the knight, ever fearful that he was the dupe of some new bit of facetiousness on the part of his squire.

"Ah, monseigneur, what would you have?" exclaimed Musaron; "orange groves, golden fruits, a noble river with silver waves, and beyond that the ocean, glistening like a mirror of steel."

"If you see the ocean," said the knight, not in haste to obtain his share of the sight, through fear that when he reached the top this magnificent view might dissolve in thin air, like some mirage such as he had heard described by pilgrims from the East, — "if you see the ocean, Musaron, you ought to be able to see Coimbra still more plainly, for Coimbra must be between us and the sea, and if you see Coimbra, then we are at the end of our travels, for Coimbra is the place appointed for my meeting with my friend, the Grand Master Frederic."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Musaron. "I see a great and beautiful city. I see a tower."

"Well, well," said the knight, beginning to believe what his squire said, but thinking to himself that if this were mere pleasantry it had been carried too far, and resolving, if so, to punish it this time most seriously; "that is the city of Coimbra, and what you see must be the tower of the Cathedral."

"What did I say, — a city? Did I say that I saw one tower? I see two cities. I see two towers."

"Two cities, two towers!" said the knight, who had now reached the summit of the hill himself. "You see, a few moments ago you were not satisfied; and now we are going to have more than we wished for."

"More than we wished for, true enough," said Musaron; "for look, Sir Agénor, one lies on the right, the other on the left. Do you notice that road which branches in two directions beyond yonder citron grove? Now which of the two towns is Coimbra, and which of the roads shall we follow?"

"Alas!" murmured the knight. "That is a new difficulty, of which I had not even dreamed!"

"And all the worse," said Musaron; "because if we should be mistaken, and should be so unlucky as to follow the road that does not lead to Coimbra, we shall not be able to find enough in our purse to pay for our lodging."

A second time the knight cast a sweeping glance about him, this time in the hope of seeing some passer-by from whom he might seek information.

"Accursed country," he cried, "or, rather, accursed desert, for to call it a country, one must suppose it to be inhabited by other creatures than lizards and locusts. Oh, to be in France!" continued the knight with a sigh, such as escapes at times from the least melancholy of men when dreaming of his native land, — "France, where there is always some friendly voice to direct the stranger on his way."

"Yes, and a cheese made from good sheep's milk to wet one's windpipe," added Musaron. "Ah, see, Sir Agénor, what comes of leaving one's country. You do well to say France! France!"

"Silence, brute!" exclaimed the knight, who was willing to think silently that which Musaron thought

aloud, but was not willing that Musaron should utter in words that which he said only to himself; "Silence!"

But Musaron intended nothing of the kind, and the reader knows the worthy squire well enough by this time to understand that it was not his custom to obey his master blindly; and so he continued, merely as if answering his own train of thought, —

"Moreover, whether or not we receive help or greeting, we are alone in this damned Portugal. Oh! the Free Companies![1] There 's a life for you! grand and fine, free and careless! O Sir Agénor, if we might only this very moment join some Free Company on horse upon the road that leads from Languedoc to Guienne!"

"You reason like a *Jacques*.[2] Do you know that, Master Musaron?" said the knight.

"And I am one, messire. Or at least I was before I entered the service of your lordship."

"And do you boast of that, wretch?"

"Say no ill of them, Sir Agénor, for when they make war, they manage to find something to eat. 'T is an advantage they have over us. We, 't is true, are not waging war; but our stomachs are empty."

"All this does not tell us which of these two towns is Coimbra," murmured the knight.

"No," said Musaron, "but *there* is some one perhaps who can tell us."

[1] "Les Grandes Compagnies" was a term applied to certain marauding companies which were especially powerful in the fourteenth century. They were originally commissioned by the king for his service, but more frequently used their power to prey upon the country. — TRANSLATOR.

[2] A word of the times, a contemptuous epithet for an insurgent peasant. — TRANSLATOR.

And he indicated to his master a cloud of dust, raised by a small caravan which was approaching, half a league behind them, on the same road as they. The sun's rays, breaking through this cloud of dust from time to time, made it sparkle like gold.

"Ah," said the knight, "at last, what we are seeking."

"Yes," said Musaron, "or some one seeking us."

"Well, just now you wished for brigands."

"Yes, but I did not ask for so many of them," said Musaron. "In truth, the heavens are about to rain them upon us. I asked for three or four, and they send us a host. We asked for a city, and two were sent to us. Hearken, sir knight," he continued, approaching his master, "let us unite in counsel, and each give his opinion, for two opinions are better than one."

"My opinion is," answered the knight, "that we had better reach that citron grove across which the main road passes, and seek first of all shelter and shade. Once there, we can be ready either for attack or defence."

"Oh, advice full of wisdom!" answered the squire half jesting, half convinced; "advice that I assent to without discussion. Shelter and shade; 't is all I desire at present. Shade is the half of water, and security is three-fourths of valor. Let us seek the citron grove, Sir Agénor, and the quicker the better."

But the two travellers had not thought about their horses. The poor beasts were so weary that, however much they were spurred on, they were not equal to anything quicker than a walk. Happily, however, the slowness of their advance had no worse result than that of leaving them longer exposed to the rays of the sun than was pleasant. The little group against which they had taken all these precautions was too far away to

perceive them. Once arrived in the grove, they made up for lost time. In an instant Musaron was off his horse, which lay down almost as soon as himself. The knight, having alighted, tossed the bridle of his horse into the hands of his squire, and seated himself at the foot of a palm-tree, rearing its stately head aloft as though it were the king of that small forest which exhaled such fragrance.

Musaron tied the knight's horse to a tree, and began to search for something to eat in the woods. After a few moments he returned with some sweet acorns and two or three citrons, offering the freshest to the knight, who thanked him, but shook his head.

"Yes," said Musaron, "I know that this is small refreshment for men who have travelled four hundred leagues in sixteen days, but what would you, sir knight? We must live upon patience, for there is nothing else here to live upon. We shall soon present ourselves before the illustrious Don Frederic, Master of St. James, brother or something of the sort to Don Pedro, King of Castile, and if he keep even a part of the promises his letter makes us, when we next travel we shall have fresh horses, mules with bells to attract passers-by, pages in livery which will delight the eyes, daughters of posadas, muleteers and mendicants. Some will bring us wine; others will offer us fruits. The more hospitable will open wide their doors, just to have the honor of lodging us; because we need nothing, we shall want for nothing. Meanwhile we must crunch acorns and suck citrons!"

"Well! well! Sir Musaron," said the knight with a smile; "in two days you will have all that you have mentioned, and this meal is the last at which you will fast."

"May God hear you, monseigneur!" said Musaron, raising to heaven his incredulous eyes, and removing from his head his cap, which bore a long plume of eagle's feathers brought from the Pyrenees. "I will endeavor to be equal to my good fortune, and, to do that, our past miseries are the ladder on which I must climb."

"Bah!" said the knight. "These past misfortunes herald the joys that are to come."

"Amen," said Musaron.

Doubtless, in spite of this very religious termination to the conversation, Musaron was about to make a fresh attack in a new direction, when suddenly the tinkling of bells, the tramping of horses or of mules, and the clang of iron began to resound in the distance.

"Quick, quick!" said the knight. "There is the very band we were speaking about. They must have made haste, and it appears that their horses are not so fatigued as ours."

Musaron placed the rest of his acorns and his citrons in a tuft of grass, and hastened towards his master's steed. In a moment the knight was in the saddle, lance in hand.

And then through the trees where they had made a short halt they saw appearing at the top of the hill a band of travellers mounted upon fine mules and richly clothed, some in Spanish, some in Moorish costume. After this first band came one who seemed to be their chief. He was wrapped in a long white cloak with silken tassels, behind which every feature was concealed except a pair of flashing eyes.

There were twelve men altogether, besides the chieftain. They were strong and well-armed. Six mules followed, led by four attendants. The men already

referred to marched at the head, their chief followed, and behind him, forming the rear-guard, the mules, the four servants, and between them a wooden litter, gilded and painted, tightly closed with silken curtains, and ventilated by holes formed in the ornaments of a carved frieze which bordered the litter. Two mules, not included in the enumeration already made, drew this litter, proceeding at a walk.

This was the company whose approach had been already announced by the tinkling of bells, great and small.

"Ah!" said Musaron, a little surprised, "these are real Moors this time, and I fear I spoke a little too soon, messire! See how black they are! *Jésus!* They might fitly be named the Devil's Body-guard! And how richly they are clad, the infidels! But look, Sir Agénor, how unlucky for us that they are so many, and our numbers are so few! I believe it would have been most pleasing unto Heaven that all this wealth should have passed into the hands of two good Christians like ourselves! Wealth, I said, and surely wealth there is, for that infidel's treasure must certainly be hidden in that wooden box all painted and gilded, which follows him, and towards which he glances so often."

"Silence!" said the knight. "Do you not see that they are taking counsel together, and that two armed pages have stationed themselves in advance, and they seem about to attack us? Come, come! prepare to lend me a hand if necessary, and pass me my shield, so that when the occasion presents itself they shall learn what it is to have to do with a French knight."

"But, messire," said Musaron, who did not seem quite as ready as his master to assume a hostile attitude,

"I think that you are mistaken. These Moorish gentlemen would not dream of attacking two inoffensive men. One of the two pages has just been consulting his master, and that muffled figure gave no order at all, but merely motioned him to advance. And look, messire, they are continuing on their way, and have not prepared a single arrow, or unslung their cross-bows. They merely placed their hands upon their swords. These are friends sent us from Heaven!"

"Moors our friends! Have you forgotten our holy religion, accursed heathen!"

Musaron felt that he had given cause for this rebuke, and bowed his head respectfully.

"Pardon, messire," he answered. "I was mistaken when I said 'friends.' I know well that a Christian cannot be the friend of a Moor, — counsellors, I meant to say, not friends. It is allowed to seek counsel of any one, when the counsels are wise. I will ask these honest gentlemen, and they will tell us what road to take."

"Very well, do so. I am willing that you should. The more willing because it seems to me that they bear themselves somewhat too proudly to please me, and their leader, he who seems to be at least, has not responded to the courteous salute which I made him with my lance. Go to him then, and ask him civilly for me, which of these two towns is Coimbra. You may add that you are come in the name of Messire Agénor de Mauléon, and in return ask of this Moorish knight his name. Go."

Musaron, who desired to present himself before the leader of the band in the most favorable light possible, attempted to rouse his horse; but it was so long a time since the animal had found shade and pasturage, and he

found it so pleasant to browse lying down, that the squire was not able to get him on his legs again, even for a moment. Musaron, quite agreeing with him, left him undisturbed, and ran on foot after the band, which had continued to advance during his deliberation and the knight's, and had just disappeared up a winding ascent, at an angle in the road shaded by olive-trees.

While Musaron ran in order to execute his errand, Agénor de Mauléon, erect in the saddle, firm in the stirrups, and motionless as some equestrian statue, did not for a moment lose the Moor and his companions from sight. Soon he saw the former pause for a moment and listen to the voice of the squire. The rest halted when he did. The little band seemed to live in the will of their chieftain. It seemed as if some inner voice informed them of his wishes, and he did not have to make a single movement in order that they should obey his pleasure.

The air was so clear, such a profound silence of nature, which seemed itself to have fallen asleep under the burning rays of the sun, the wind from the sea was so gentle, that there was not the least obstacle in the way of the knight's hearing every word spoken by Musaron; and Musaron acquitted himself of his mission, proving himself to be an ambassador as clever as he was faithful.

"I salute your lordship!" he began; "first, in the name of my master, the honorable and valorous Sir Agénor de Mauléon, who yonder in the stirrups awaits your lordship's answer. I salute you also in the name of his unworthy squire, who rejoices most sincerely that chance has permitted him to address these words to you."

The Moor inclined his head merely, in grave and circumspect silence, awaiting the end of this discourse.

"May it please your lordship to inform us," continued Musaron, "which of those two towers we see yonder is that of Coimbra. We would also learn, if your lordship can tell us, in those two towns bordering the sea, which of all those fine palaces is that of the illustrious Master of St. James, the friend who is impatiently waiting to receive the gallant knight who has the honor of asking you through me for this twofold piece of information."

Musaron, in order to add distinction to his master and himself, had delivered himself of the words relating to Don Frederic even more impressively than the rest of his address; and in fact, as if in proof of his skill, the Moor listened most attentively to the second part of the discourse, his eyes sparkling with a fire characteristic of those of his nation, a ray of intelligence so keen that it might have been borrowed from the sun itself.

But he answered the second part no more than the first; and after a moment's reflection, bowing as he had done once before, he said to his men a single word in Arabic, pronounced in an imperious and guttural voice. Then the advance-guard resumed its march, the Moorish knight urged his mule forward, and the rear-guard, in the midst of which was the closed litter, followed in turn.

Musaron remained for a moment stupefied and humiliated. As for the knight, he could scarcely tell whether the word of Arabic, which he had understood no more than had Musaron, was in response to the squire or addressed by the Moor to his suite.

"Ah!" said Musaron, suddenly, not willing to admit even to himself that such an insult had been offered,

and to him; "ah! he does not understand French! that is the cause for his silence! *Pardieu!* I should have addressed him in Castilian!"

But as the Moor was already too far for Musaron to follow him afoot, and as, moreover, the prudent squire preferred this doubtful consolation to a humiliating certainty, he returned to his master.

III.

HOW, WITHOUT THE MOOR'S ASSISTANCE, AGÉNOR DE MAULÉON FOUND COIMBRA AND THE PALACE OF DON FREDERIC, MASTER OF ST. JAMES.

AGÉNOR, furious at what he had heard, and that which his squire repeated to him, was for obtaining instantly by force that which the Moor had refused to courtesy. But when he attempted to spur on his steed in pursuit of the insolent Saracen, the poor animal showed so little disposition to second his master's wishes that the knight was obliged to pause upon the steep and stony ascent referred to elsewhere. The rear-guard of the Moor observed the two Frenchmen's movements, and looked about at intervals to avoid being surprised.

"Messire Agénor," cried Musaron, alarmed at this demonstration, although the weariness of the knight's steed removed all possible chance of danger in overtaking the party, "Messire Agénor, did I not tell you that this Moor did not understand French, and have I not confessed to you, that though I was scandalized even as you yourself are by his silence, the idea of questioning him in Spanish did not occur to me until it was too late to put it into execution? It is not he who is at fault, but I who did not have this happy idea until too late. Besides," he added, seeing that the knight was obliged to halt, "we are alone, and your horse is exhausted."

Mauléon shook his head.

"All well enough," he said. "But this Moor did not behave as was to be expected. He may not have understood French, but in every country in the world the universal language of signs is comprehended. And in pronouncing the word Coimbra you pointed alternately to the two towns, and he must have understood that you were asking the way. I cannot overtake this insolent Moor at present, but by the Blood of Our Saviour which cries out for vengeance against these infidels, let him not cross my path!"

"On the contrary, messire," said Musaron, in whom prudence did not exclude either courage or a desire for vengeance. "On the contrary, encounter him, but under other conditions. Meet him face to face with the servants who guard his litter. You will take care of the master, and I will handle the servants. Then we shall see what he guards so carefully in that gilded wooden box!"

"Some idol, most likely," answered the knight.

"Or perhaps his treasure," said Musaron; "a big coffer filled with diamonds, pearls, rubies. For these cursed infidels can conjure and call to their aid other means for discovering hidden treasures. Oh, if there had only been six of us, we would have let you see, Sir Moor! Had there been four only! O France, France!" continued Musaron, "where art thou? Valiant knights-at-arms, where are you? Worthy adventurers, comrades mine, why are you not here?"

"Ah!" suddenly exclaimed the knight, who had been reflecting during this outburst of his squire, "now I bethink me."

"Of what?" asked Musaron.

"Of Don Frederic's letter."

"Well?"

"Well! perhaps in this letter we may find some information which I have forgotten concerning the road to Coimbra."

"Ah! *vrai Dieu!* how great a thing is wise speech and sane afterthought! The letter, Sir Agénor, the letter! if it serve no other purpose than to console and strengthen us once more with the fair promises it made you."

The knight took from his saddle-bow a little roll of perfumed leather, and from this roll drew a parchment. It was the letter of Don Frederic, which he kept both as a passport and a talisman.

It contained these words: —

"Noble and generous knight, Don Agénor de Mauléon: Do you remember the fine thrusts you exchanged at Narbonne with Don Frederic, Master of St. James, when the Castilians visited France to bring home Doña Bianca de Bourbon?"

"Madame Blanche de Bourbon, he means to say," interrupted the squire with a contemptuous toss of the head, and the manner of a man who professes to understand Spanish and cannot afford to let pass a single occasion for informing others of his knowledge.

The knight eyed Musaron askance, with the expression with which he habitually received the fanfaronades of every sort which he permitted his squire. Then his eyes returned to the parchment.

"I promised to remember it well, for you were noble and courteous towards me."

"The fact is," interrupted Musaron a second time, "that your lordship might very easily have introduced your poniard into his gorget, as you did so delicately for the monk of Lourdes, during that combat at the

Pass of Larre; for in that famous tourney where you disarmed him, and he, furious at being disarmed, wished to continue the combat with blunt arms, instead of arms of parade, of which you had made use, you had him under your knee, and instead of abusing your victory, you said generously, — I remember still those noble words, — ' Rise, Master of St. James, and live to be the glory of Castilian knighthood! ' "

And Musaron accompanied these last words with a majestic gesture, which, though he was not conscious of it, parodied the one made by his master upon that solemn occasion.

" If he was disarmed," said Mauléon, " it was because of his horse, which was not able to rally from the blow. These coursers, half Arabian, half Castilian, are better than ours for a race, but of less value in a combat. And if he fell beneath me it was because his stirrup caught against the root of a tree just as my axe had struck a blow upon his head. 'T is an intrepid and skilled knight. Well, no matter," continued Agénor, who in spite of the fact that he had just given evidence of his modesty, spoke with a certain pride, which he was not quite able to suppress; " the day when that memorable passage of arms took place at Narbonne was a fortunate day for me ! "

" Aside from the fact that you received the prize from Madame Blanche de Bourbon herself, who was very pale and trembling, sweet princess, at seeing that the tourney at which she was to preside had become a veritable combat. Yes, seigneur," added Musaron, quite in a flutter to think what great things might perhaps await his master and himself at Coimbra, " you say well that it was a fortunate day for you, for on that day your fortune was made."

"I trust so," answered Agénor, modestly. "But to continue."

And he resumed the reading: —

"To-day I recall the promise which you made to accord to me only the brotherhood of arms. We are both Christians. Come to my palace at Coimbra in Portugal, which I have just conquered from the infidels. I will procure for you every opportunity for noble feats of arms against the enemies of our holy religion. You shall be in my palace as myself, and as a brother in my court. Come, then, my brother; for I have need of a man who loves me, — I, who am surrounded by adroit and dangerous enemies.

"Coimbra is a town you already know by name, situated in Portugal, two leagues from the sea, on the Mondego River. You will have to traverse no countries that are hostile. First you will come to Aragon, which is the primitive domain left by Don Sancho the Great to Ramirio, who was a natural son like yourself, and a great king, as you are a brave knight; then you will reach New Castile, which King Alphonso VI. began to regain from the Moors, a work that his successors have completed; then Leon, theatre of the great exploits of the illustrious Pelagio, the gallant knight whose history I have already related to you. Last of all, you will cross Acqueda, and then you will be in Portugal, where I await you. Do not keep too closely to the mountains which you will see on the left, unless your suite is large, and trust yourself neither to the Jews nor to the Moors whom you may find on the road.

"Adieu! Do you remember that for one whole day I bore the name of Agénor in your honor, whilst all that day you called yourself Frederic in mine?

"And all that day I bore your colors, and you mine. Thus it was we walked together, you wearing my scarf, and I yours, side by side as far as Urgel, escorting our well-beloved queen, Doña Bianca de Bourbon. Come, Don Agénor, I have need of a brother and a friend; come!"

"But," said Musaron, "there is nothing in this letter to guide us."

"Nothing? Indeed, on the contrary, there is everything. Have you not listened? Is it not true that for a whole day I wore his scarf?"

"Well?"

"Yes, and its colors were red and yellow. Search well, Musaron, you whose sight is so piercing, and discover whether in either town there is a building over which floats a banner as yellow as gold and as red as blood; and that building will be the palace of my friend Don Frederic, and about that palace rises the town of Coimbra."

Musaron raised his hand to his eyes to shade them from the sun's rays, which made it impossible to distinguish any object in those waves of light formed by that burning sea. After having allowed his glance to stray from left to right, and right to left, he fixed his eyes finally upon a town situated at the right of the river, in one of the windings formed by its course.

"In that case, Sir Agénor," said Musaron, "Coimbra lies at the right, at the foot of yonder hill, and behind that wall of plantain and aloe-trees; for upon the principal edifice floats a banner such as you described, and above it is a red cross."

"The cross of St. James!" exclaimed the knight. "It must be that! but you are not mistaken, Musaron?"

"Your lordship may look for yourself."

"But the sun's rays are so powerful that I can distinguish nothing. Show me where you are looking."

"There, messire, there! Follow that road, — there between the two arms of that river; it branches in opposite directions. Do you see?"

"Yes."

"Follow the right branch, which keeps closer to the main stream. Look, there is the Moor's party, entering through one of the gates. Look, look!"

Just at that moment the sun, which had been an obstacle for the two travellers until then, came to Musaron's assistance, causing a fiery ray to dart from the armor of the Moors, which glistened like gold.

"Yes, yes, I see!" he cried. Then, after a moment's reflection, —

"Ah! the Moor was going to Coimbra, and did not understand the word. Strange! the first courtesy that Don Frederic shows me shall be to tell me the cause of this insolence."

"But how is it," continued the knight, still speaking to himself, "that Don Frederic, so pious a prince, whose mere title alone places him in the foremost rank as a defender of the faith, — how is it that he suffers these Moors in a town which he lately conquered from them, in a town from which he has driven them away?"

"What would you, messire?" said Musaron, who had not been questioned. "Is not Don Frederic the natural brother of Seigneur Don Pedro, King of Castile?"

"Even so?" demanded Agénor.

"Even so? It surprises me that you do not know, since the rumor of it has spread even into France, that love for the Moors is inborn in that family. It is said that the king himself would not know what to do without them. For his counsellors he chooses Moors, for his physicians Moors, for his body-guard Moors again, while the daughters of Moors are his mistresses."

"Silence, Master Musaron," said the knight; "and do not attempt to meddle with the affairs of Don Pedro, a great prince, and the brother of my illustrious friend."

"Brother, brother!" murmured Musaron. "I have heard it said that this brotherhood is one of those Moorish fraternities which may be terminated any day by a noose or a scimitar! I 'd rather have for brother Guillonet, tending goats in the valley of Andorra, and singing

"'Upon the mountain yonder
A hapless shepherd stands!'

than to have for brother Don Pedro of Castile. That is my own opinion of the matter."

"It may be your opinion," said the knight, "but mine is that you had better not add another word. When we are about to demand the hospitality of others, the least we can do is to refrain from speaking evil of them."

"We are not going to the court of Don Pedro of Castile," observed the incorrigible Musaron, "but to that of Don Frederic, Seigneur of Coimbra in Portugal."

"Whether to one or the other," said the knight, "I desire silence."

Musaron raised his white cap with its red tassel, and indulged in an amused smile, which was concealed by the long locks, black as ebony, that fell about his thin, tanned cheeks.

"When your lordship desires to set forth," he said, after a moment's silence, "his very humble servant awaits his orders."

"It is of your horse you must ask that question. In any event, if he does not wish to start, we will leave him where he is, and when evening comes on, and he hears the wolves howling, he will find his way alone to the town without difficulty."

And in fact the animal, as if he had comprehended the threat just made, raised himself more quickly than

can be believed, and presented his back, all dripping with sweat, to his master.

"Let us go," said Agénor.

And he set forth, raising for the second time the visor of his helmet which he had lowered as the Moor passed by.

And had the Arab chief been present at this moment, his piercing gaze might have discerned, through the opening of the knight's helmet, a fine and noble countenance, though it was inflamed with heat and powdered with dust. The face was full of character; the eyes were bold and daring; the lips delicate and fine; the chin, though beardless, was firmly set, indicating an obstinate will.

In fact he was a fair young knight, this Agénor de Mauléon, and his shield told him so, as he saw his own reflection in its polished mirror after receiving it from Musaron's hands.

Their halt had refreshed the horses somewhat. They resumed their journey with quickened pace, following the road which it was impossible now to mistake, for the banner with the colors of the Master of St. James, floating over the palace, guided them.

As they advanced, they saw the inhabitants of the city emerging from their doorways, in spite of the heat of the day. The sound of trumpets was heard and the chiming of bells filled the air with their joyous vibrations.

"Had I sent Musaron in advance," said Agénor to himself, "I really should have believed that all this uproar, all this ceremony, must be in honor of me. But however flattering to my vanity such a reception would be, I must attribute all this commotion to some other cause."

As to Musaron, who saw in all these preparations the obvious signs of future rejoicings, he raised his head gayly, preferring in any case that their reception should be a light-hearted rather than a melancholy one.

The two travellers were not deceived. A great commotion filled the town, and if the faces of the people did not wear precisely the smiling mask of joy which the flourish of the trumpets and the ringing of bells seemed to enjoin upon them, their expression was at least that of men in whose neighborhood has taken place some important and unexpected event.

As for asking the way, Agénor and his squire found that quite needless. They had only to follow the crowd, which was rushing on towards the principal square of the town.

Just as they burst through the crowd to reach the square, and as Musaron was distributing, right and left, sundry cracks with the end of his whip to clear a way for the noble lord who followed him, suddenly they saw rising before them, shaded by high palm-trees and tufted sycamores, bent in the direction given them by sea-winds on many a stormy day, the magnificent Moorish Alcazar built by King Mohammed, which was at this time the dwelling of the young conqueror, Don Frederic.

However great was their desire to arrive as speedily as possible, Agénor and his squire paused for a moment in admiration before that vast and capricious monument, all embroidered with the finest lacework in stone, and incrusted with marble mosaics, which, with its slabs of topaz, sapphire, and lapis-lazuli, seemed as if erected by some architect of Bagdad, to be the palace of fairies or of houris.

The West, or at least that portion of it which we call,

relatively to Spain, Le Midi de la France, knows only the Romanic cathedrals of Sainte-Trophine, or its bridges and ancient arches, but could have no idea of those ogives and granite trefoils which the Orient placed, one hundred years later, upon the façade of its cathedrals and the pinnacles of its towers. This Alcazar of Coimbra was a magnificent sight, even for our ignorant and barbarous forefathers who despised, at this epoch, the Arabic and Italian civilization which was to enrich them later on.

While they stood thus motionless in contemplation, they saw a body of guards and pages pass forth from the two lateral gates of the palace, leading mules and horses.

The two divisions, describing each an arc, met again, driving the people before them, and clearing in front of the entrance to the palace, which was reached by a stairway of ten steps, a large open space in the shape of an arc, whose chord was the façade of the palace itself.

The mingling of the dazzling luxury of Africa with the severer elegance of the Occidental costume gave an irresistible attraction to this spectacle, and Agénor and his squire felt its influence, as they observed on the one hand the caparison of those Arabian horses, rich with gold and purple, the costumes of the Moorish knights, and on the other hand silk and chasings, and, in all that display, a thousand evidences of Frankish pride, visible even in the bearing of their beasts of burden.

The crowd, viewing all this spectacle displayed for its benefit, cried "Viva!" as it does always at the sight of every spectacle of the sort.

Suddenly the banner of the Grand Master appeared

beneath the high vaulted arch carved in trefoil, which formed the central entrance of the Alcazar. This banner, carried by a powerful warrior, and accompanied by six guards, was placed in the centre of the open space.

Agénor perceived that Don Frederic was about to accompany some procession through the streets, or to journey from one town to another; and he was tempted in spite of the emptiness of his purse to seek some hostelry where he might await the Grand Master's return, for he did not wish that his presence should disturb inopportunely any arrangements which Don Frederic had made for his departure.

But at the same moment, beneath one of the lateral arches of the Alcazar, appeared the advance-guard of the Moorish chief, and then, completely closed as before, that gilded, wooden litter, still borne upon the backs of white mules, the sight of which had filled Musaron with desires as powerful as they were deeply religious.

At last a louder sound of cymbals and trumpets announced that the Grand Master himself was about to appear, and twenty-four musicians, eight abreast, advanced in order under the arched roof to the steps which they descended, still playing.

Behind them bounded a dog, one of those vigorous but slender dogs of the Sierras, his head pointed like a bear's, his eye sparkling like a lynx's, his nervous legs shaped like those of a deer. His entire body was covered with long silken hairs, which, under the sun, glistened with silvery reflections. On his neck was a large golden collar, inlaid with rubies, and a little bell of the same metal. His joy betrayed itself by his movements, which had both a visible object and one that was hidden.

The visible object was a horse, white as snow, covered with a magnificent housing of purple and brocade. This animal received his caresses, neighing as if in response. The hidden object was, without doubt, some noble knight who still remained under the arch, for the dog disappeared from sight beneath it, then reappeared some moments later, bounding joyously.

At last, he for whom the horse was neighing, he whom the dog impatiently awaited, he for whom all the people were crying, "Viva!" appeared, and a single cry arose, repeated by a thousand voices, —

"Long live Don Frederic!"

Don Frederic advanced, talking with the Arab chief, who marched at his right, while a young page marched at the left. The face of the latter was beautiful, and his black brows and a slight compression of his red lips gave to his features an expression of decision. He carried an open purse filled with gold pieces, from which Don Frederic, when he had arrived at the first step, drew forth handfuls of coin, and scattered them with a hand white and delicate as a woman's, while a golden shower fell upon the excited multitude, who redoubled their cries at such largess, to which they had not been accustomed under the predecessors of their new master.

The Grand Master's form was majestic even on horseback. The mixture of Gallic with Spanish blood had given him long black locks, blue eyes, and a white skin; and in these eyes shone an expression so sweet, so benevolent, that many of the people could not lose sight of him for a moment, and forgot even to gather the sequins which his hand had thrown; and all about the palace the air resounded with benedictions.

Suddenly, in the midst of the general rejoicing, whether by chance, or whether they were influenced by

the thought that they were soon to lose for a time so good a master, the trumpets and cymbals which had paused for a few moments resounded once more, but this time, instead of the gay and joyous sounds that had reverberated before, the people heard a sad and melancholy air, while the bells, that new invention serving as a mediator between man and God, gave forth no longer their gay and brilliant chimes, but began to toll, with a dull sound, muffled, prolonged, and mournful, like that of a tocsin.

At the same moment the dog, turning towards his master, placed his two paws on his breast, and a barking was heard, so mournful, so prolonged, that the bravest shuddered at the sound.

The people were dumfounded, and in the midst of the silence a voice cried, —

"Do not go, Grand Master! Remain with us, Don Frederic!"

But none knew from whom came this counsel.

Agénor observed that the Moor was startled at this cry, and his face became of that earthen hue characteristic of pallor in these children of the sun, while his restless glance sought to penetrate to the inmost depths of Don Frederic's soul, and to read there what answer he would make to that isolated cry and the general stupefaction that had fallen upon the people.

But Don Frederic, caressing the howling dog with his hand, motioned gently to his page, and, smiling sadly, saluted the multitude which regarded him with joined hands and suppliant eyes.

"My good friends," said he, "the king, my brother, has ordered me to Seville, where fêtes and tournaments await me, that all may rejoice at our reconciliation. Instead of wishing to prevent my rejoining my brother,

ask rather a blessing upon the reunion of two brothers who love each other."

But instead of hearing these words joyfully, the people received them in gloomy silence. The page whispered some words to his master, and the dog continued to howl.

All this time the Moor's gaze did not for one moment lose sight of the people, the page, the dog, and Don Frederic himself.

Meanwhile a shadow darkened the Grand Master's face for a moment. The Moor saw that he hesitated.

"Seigneur," he said, "you know that the book of each man's destiny is in his own hands. For some the book is merely of bronze; for others the book is of gold. Yours is inscribed in golden letters, therefore fulfil your destiny boldly and without fear."

Don Frederic raised his eyes, which had been lowered for a moment, as if in search of a single friendly face, a single encouraging glance from all that multitude.

Just at that moment, Agénor, on his side, turned about in the saddle, that he might not lose the least detail of the scene that was passing before him. As if he had divined the object of the Grand Master's quest, with one hand he raised the visor of his helmet while with the other he waved his lance.

The Grand Master uttered a cry of joy. His eyes sparkled. A happy smile grew upon his lips, red as a maiden's, and spread to his entire countenance.

"Don Agénor!" he cried, stretching his hand towards the knight.

And the page, as if privileged to read the very heart of his master, needed to hear no more, hastened from Don Frederic, and rushed towards the knight, crying, "Come, Don Agénor, come!"

The crowd made way for him, for it loved all whom Don Frederic loved, and at the same moment all eyes were fixed upon the knight, whom the Grand Master received as did young Tobias of old the divine companion whom the heavens had sent him.

Agénor alighted, tossed his horse's reins to Musaron, gave him his lance, hung his shield to the saddle-bow, and passed through the crowd, conducted by the page.

Again the Moor grew pale. He also had recognized the French knight whom he had encountered upon the road to Coimbra, and the squire to whom he had not replied.

Meanwhile Frederic extended his arms to Agénor, who rushed to his embrace with all the enthusiasm of a youth of twenty.

And indeed one might marvel, merely to look upon the beauty of the two young men, for in both faces shone all those noble sentiments which combine but rarely to make a complete image of earthly loveliness.

"Will you follow me?" asked Don Frederic of Agénor.

"To the end of the world," answered the knight.

"My friends," said the Grand Master in a voice whose sonorous vibrations were loved by all, "now I can depart, and you need have no more fears. Don Agénor de Mauléon, my brother, my friend, the flower of French knighthood, will go with me!"

And at a signal from the Grand Master, the drums beat a quick march, the trumpets sounded a joyous flourish, Don Frederic's squire led forth his beautiful horse, white as snow, and the people cried with one voice, —

"Long live Don Frederic, Grand Master of St. James! Long live Don Agénor, the French knight!"

At this moment Don Frederic's dog looked the knight and the Moor in the face. He showed his white teeth to the Moor, with a surly, menacing growl. He fawned upon the knight with a thousand caresses.

The page passed his hand under the dog's neck with a sorrowful smile.

"Seigneur," said Agénor to the young prince, "when you besought me to follow you, and I answered that I would, I consulted only the voice of my own zeal, even as I have done in coming here from Tarbes. I have come hither in a fortnight. It was a rude journey. My horses are nearly dead with fatigue, and I shall not be able to accompany you very far."

"What!" exclaimed Don Frederic; "have I not said that everything in my palace is yours? My arms, my horses are yours, and everything else in Coimbra. Choose from my stables horses for yourself and mules for your squire. No, no, you must not leave my sight for a single moment. Fernando rather shall attend to everything. Saddle Antrim, my battle-steed, and ask Don Agénor's squire on the way whether he prefers a horse or a mule. As for the tired beasts, you shall keep them. Every good knight does. They shall follow, with the rear-guard, and be cared for."

With a single bound the page disappeared.

During this time the Moor, who believed that the moment for their departure had arrived, had descended to take a walk around his litter, and give some orders to those who were guarding it. But, observing that their departure had been delayed, and that the two friends were alone together, and busied in the exchange of confidential words, he hastily ascended to their neighborhood, and resumed his position at the Grand Master's side.

"Seigneur Mothril," said Don Frederic, "the knight whom you see is one of my friends. Nay, he is more than that. He is my brother-in-arms, and he is going with me to Seville, where I shall offer him as captain of the guards to my liege, the King of Castile; and if the king consents to allow him to remain with me after I have offered him, I shall bless him for that, for 't is an incomparable blade, and a heart still more valiant!"

The Moor replied in excellent Spanish, although in his pronunciation there was that guttural accent which Agénor had remarked before on the road to Coimbra, when he had pronounced that one word of Arabic, after which he had resumed his march.

"I thank your lordship for apprising me of the name and quality of the knight, but chance had already presented the noble Frenchman to me. Unfortunately a stranger, a traveller like myself, when, like me, he belongs to a hostile nation, must often mistrust chance; and so I did not receive Seigneur Agénor with that courtesy which was due to him, when I met him a while ago in the mountains."

"Ah!" said Frederic with curiosity, "you have met before?"

"Yes, seigneur," answered Agénor in French; "and I confess, the negligence of Sir Moor in not replying to a simple question which I asked him through my squire, in order to discover our way, wounded me somewhat. On the other side of the Pyrenees we are more civil to strangers who are our guests."

"Messire," replied Mothril in Spanish, "you err upon one point. The Moors are still in Spain, it is true, but they are no longer at home; and on this side of the Pyrenees, except at Granada, the Moors them-

selves are scarcely more than the guests of the Spaniards."

"How now?" whispered Musaron to himself, who, unperceived by any one, had approached the steps; "he does understand French after all!"

"Dispel this cloud, both of you! Seigneur Mothril, the friend, the minister of my lord the King of Castile, will surely, I trust, view with favor the knight of Mauléon, friend and brother of the king's brother."

The Moor bowed, but made no other answer; and as Musaron, still consumed with a desire to know what the litter concealed, came nearer to it than Mothril doubtless desired that any one should come, he descended the steps again, and under the pretext of giving one of his men an order that he had previously forgotten, he placed himself between the litter and the squire.

Frederic availed himself of the opportunity to lean towards Agénor, saying, —

"You behold in this Moor him who governs my brother, and consequently governs me."

"Ah!" replied Agénor, "why these bitter words? A prince of your race, a knight of your valor can be governed only by God. Remember that always, Don Frederic."

"And yet I am going to Seville," answered the Grand Master with a sigh.

"And wherefore?"

"The King Don Pedro has requested it, and the requests of Don Pedro are commands."

The Moor seemed to be divided between a feeling of annoyance at leaving his litter, and one of apprehension in permitting Don Frederic to say too much to the French knight. Fear gained the upper hand, and he returned to the two friends.

"Seigneur," he said to Don Frederic, "I have news to impart to your lordship, which I fear will prove hostile to your plans. I thought best to inquire of my secretary, although I was already almost certain. The King Don Pedro has already as officer of the guards a captain from Tarifa, a brave man, in whom he places entire confidence, although he was born, or rather his ancestors were, on the other side of the mountains. I fear the French seigneur's efforts will be quite useless, if he comes to the court of the King Don Pedro, which makes me the readier to counsel that he remain at Coimbra, especially as Doña Padilla, as every one knows, has no love for the French."

"Indeed," said Frederic, "is it even so, Seigneur Mothril? Then so much the better! I shall keep my friend with myself."

"I have not come to Spain, but to Portugal. I am not come to serve the King Don Pedro, but the Grand Master Don Frederic," said Agénor, proudly. "That is the service which I sought. That shall be mine, and I desire no other. Here is my master!"

And he saluted his friend courteously.

The Moor smiled. His white teeth glistened above his black beard.

"Oh, those beautiful teeth!" thought Musaron. "How they could bite one!"

At that moment the page appeared, leading Antrim, the Grand Master's war-horse, and Coronella, Musaron's mule. The exchange was made immediately. Agénor de Mauléon mounted a fresh steed; Musaron straddled a fresh mule. Their weary beasts were given to attendants, and at the invitation of the Moor, Don Frederic descended the steps and mounted in turn.

But the beautiful dog with the long white hair seemed

to oppose his plan for a second time. He placed himself between his master and the horse, howling, and striving to drive his master away.

But Don Frederic pushed him back with his foot, and, in spite of all these demonstrations from his faithful dog, sprang to the saddle, and gave the order for departure. Then the dog, as if he had understood the order, and as if it had driven him to despair, sprang at the throat of the steed, and bit him cruelly.

The horse reared, snorted with pain, and gave one bound to the side, which would have unhorsed any other knight less skilled than Don Frederic.

"What, Allan!" he exclaimed, giving the dog the name by which its race was known. "Cruel beast, are you mad?"

And, with the lash of the whip he held in his hand, he gave it a blow so violent that the dog was thrown, and rolled over a few steps away.

"That dog should be killed," said Mothril.

Fernando cast a side glance at him.

Allan seated himself on the steps of the Alcazar, raised his head, opened his mouth, and howled mournfully a second time.

Then all the people who had silently witnessed this long scene raised their voices, and the cry which before had sprung from a single throat now became general.

"Do not go, Don Frederic. Remain with us, Grand Master. What need have you of a brother, when you have a people? What more can Seville promise you than is offered to you already at Coimbra?"

"Monseigneur," said Mothril, "I must return to my master, the king! Shall I tell him that your dog, your page, and your people do not wish you to go?"

"No, Seigneur Mothril," said Don Frederic, "we will go. Onward, friends!"

And saluting the people with his hands, he placed himself at the head of the cavalcade, making his way through the silent crowd, which opened before him.

And the gilded gates of the Alcazar closed again, groaning, as they did so, like the rust-eaten portal of an empty sepulchre.

The dog remained upon the steps as long as he could see his master, as long as there was a chance that he might return; but when that last hope was lost, when Don Frederic had disappeared at the turning of the street leading towards the gate of Seville, he sprang forth in pursuit, and soon rejoined the party. It seemed as if, having been unable to hinder them from going forth to face certain danger, he desired, at least, to share it with them.

Ten minutes later they had left Coimbra, and were upon the same road over which the Moor, Mothril, and Agénor had travelled that morning.

IV.

HOW MUSARON PERCEIVED THAT THE MOOR CONVERSED WITH HIS LITTER, AND THE LITTER ANSWERED.

THE Grand Master's party was composed of thirty-eight men in all, including the French knight and his squire, without counting the Moor, his twelve guards, pages, and body-servants. Sumpter-mules bore valuable luggage of various kinds, for Don Frederic had been informed a week before that he was expected by his brother at Seville as soon as the Moor arrived. He had therefore given orders to depart immediately, hoping that the Moor would be too weary to follow, and would remain behind. But fatigue seemed a thing unknown to these children of the desert, or to their horses, who seemed descended from those famous steeds described by Virgil, whom the winds fecundated.

Ten leagues were made that day, and when night was come they pitched their tents on the mountain slope beyond which Pombal rises.

During the first part of their journey the Moor exercised the most assiduous watchfulness over the two friends. First, under the pretext of making his excuses to the French knight, and afterwards, as if to redeem his previous rudeness by his present courtesy, he scarcely left Agénor's side except when it was necessary to exchange some words with the guardians of the litter. But in spite of the short duration of those absences, to which some motive stronger

than any other seemed to condemn the Moor, Agénor found time to say to the Grand Master,—

"Seigneur Don Frederic, will you deign to tell me, I beseech, whence springs this insistence of the Moor? Why is he bent upon following us, and conversing with us? He must love you dearly, monseigneur, for, I believe that I have scarcely received his somewhat tardy advances in a fashion which can inspire any very great affection for myself."

"I do not know whether Mothril has any great love for me," said Don Frederic, "but I know how deeply he hates Doña Padilla, the king's mistress."

Agénor glanced at the Grand Master with the air of a man who has heard and not comprehended; but the eavesdropping Moor approached them at that moment, and Don Frederic had only time to say to the knight,—

"Speak of other things."

Agénor endeavored to obey, and, as if it was the thought that presented itself most naturally to his mind, he said,—

"Apropos, Seigneur Don Frederic, can you tell me whether our honored lady, Blanche of Bourbon, Queen of Castile, has learned to accustom herself to life in Spain? There is grave uneasiness in France concerning this noble princess, whom so many prayers accompanied on her departure from Narbonne, whither you had come, in behalf of the king, to conduct her to her betrothed."

Agénor had scarcely uttered these words when his knee was jostled violently by the page, who, as if compelled by his horse, passed between Don Frederic and his friend, and, as if asking the knight to excuse himself and his beast for their awkwardness, bestowed on him one of those glances capable of choking speech upon the most indiscreet of tongues.

Meanwhile, Don Frederic realized that some answer must be made, for in that situation in which he was placed, silence was open to even a worse interpretation than speech.

"But," interrupted Mothril, who appeared to have as great an interest in continuing the conversation as Frederic had in dropping it, "has Seigneur Agénor heard no news of Doña Bianca since her arrival in Spain?"

"Seigneur," answered the knight, much surprised, "for two or three years I have been with the Free Companies making war against the English, enemies of my master, King John, prisoner at London, and of our regent, Prince Charles, who will be called some day Charles the Wise, for he has shown already such precocious prudence and high virtue."

"Wherever you have been," answered Mothril, "I should have thought that the affair of Toledo had made noise enough to reach even your ears."

Don Frederic paled slightly, and the page carried one finger to his lips, motioning Agénor to be silent.

Agénor understood perfectly, and was content to murmur merely to himself, "O Spain, Spain, land of mystery!"

But it was not the intention of the Moor that the conversation should cease.

"Since you are no better informed concerning your regent's sister-in-law, sir knight," said he, "I myself will tell you what befell her."

"To what end, Seigneur Mothril?" asked Frederic. "My friend Don Agénor asked one of those thoughtless questions that require merely 'yes' or 'no' for an answer,—no long narration which would have not the slightest interest for a listener who is a complete stranger to Spain."

"But," said Mothril, "if Seigneur Agénor is a stranger to Spain, at least he is not to France, and Señora Bianca is French. And, moreover, the tale is not long, and as he is going to the king's court at Seville, he should be told what things may be spoken of there, and what must not be."

Don Frederic sighed, and drew the hood of his large white mantle over his eyes, as if to shield them from the rays of the setting sun.

"You yourself accompanied Doña Bianca from Narbonne to Urgel, is not that so?" asked Mothril; "or am I mistaken, Sir Agénor?"

"It is true," answered the knight, who, though the page's counsel and the darkened face of Don Frederic had rendered him more circumspect, was, notwithstanding, incapable of concealing the truth.

"Well, she continued on her way to Madrid, crossing Aragon and a part of New Castile, under the escort of Seigneur Don Frederic, who conducted her to Alcalá, where the nuptials were celebrated with a magnificence worthy of the royal pair; but the following day,—and the cause has always remained a mystery," continued Mothril, casting at Frederic one of those keen, brilliant glances that were habitual with him,—"the following day the king returned to Madrid, leaving his young wife in the castle of Alcalá, a prisoner rather than a queen."

Mothril interrupted his own narration long enough to discover whether either of the two friends would speak in favor of Doña Bianca, but both were silent. The Moor continued,—

"From that day the separation was complete between the pair; moreover, a council of bishops pronounced them divorced. You can readily understand, sir knight, that there must have been grave reasons for complaint against

the stranger," continued the Moor, smiling ironically, "otherwise a society as respectable and as holy as this council would not have annulled a tie which policy as well as religion had formed."

"Or else," answered Frederic, incapable of concealing his real feelings any longer, "or else the council must have been most devoted to the King Don Pedro."

"Oh!" said Mothril, with a naïveté which made each bit of pleasantry all the more bitter and keen; "how can we suppose that forty-two pious people, whose mission it is to direct the consciences of others, would have been so wanting in conscience themselves? It is impossible, for what could one think then of a religion represented by such ministers?"

The two friends still maintained silence.

"About this time the king fell ill, and it was believed that he would die. Then ambitions which had been previously concealed leaped to the light of day; Don Henry of Trastamare —"

"Seigneur Mothril," said Frederic, seizing this occasion to answer the Moor, "do not forget that Don Henry of Trastamare is my twin brother, and that in my presence it is no more permitted to speak ill of him than of Don Pedro, King of Castile."

"Fitly spoken," answered Mothril. "I had forgotten that the relationship existed, having seen Henry so rebellious, and yourself so affectionately disposed, towards the King Don Pedro. But now I will speak only of Madame Blanche."

"Damned Moor," murmured Frederic.

Agénor shot a glance at the Grand Master, which seemed to say, —

"Would you rid yourself of this man, seigneur? It is easily done."

Mothril did not appear either to see the glance or to read what it said.

"I have said that ambitions long hidden were revealed, loyalty weakened, and, just at the moment when the life of Don Pedro hovered on the borders of eternity, the gates of the castle of Alcalá were opened, and one night Doña Bianca went forth from them, escorted by a strange knight who conducted her to Toledo, where she lived for a time concealed. But Providence so willed that our well-loved King Don Pedro, protected by the prayers of all his subjects, and possibly by those of his family as well, was restored to health and strength.

"Then it was that he learned of the flight of Doña Bianca, aided by the strange knight, and also the fugitive's hiding-place, where some said she remained in order to escape later to France; and I myself am of that opinion, though others believed that she had been taken there until she should be placed in a stronger prison than the first.

"But in any case, whatever was the intention of the king, her husband, Doña Bianca, warned in time of the orders about to be given, took refuge one Sunday in the cathedral of Toledo in the midst of divine service, declared to the people that she claimed right of sanctuary there, and threw herself upon the protection of the God of the Christians.

"It seemed that Doña Bianca was beautiful," continued the Moor, glancing successively at the knight and at the Grand Master, as if to interrogate them; "perhaps too fair. I myself have never seen her. Her beauty, the mystery shrouding her misfortunes, moreover, perhaps — who can say — other influences that had been at work for a long time, moved all hearts in her favor. The bishop, who was one of the council that

had annulled the marriage, was chased from the church, which was converted into a fortress, and here preparations were made to defend Doña Bianca against the king's guards, who were approaching."

"What!" exclaimed Agénor; "did the guards think of capturing Doña Bianca in a church? Did Christians consent to violate the right of sanctuary?"

"Yes, as God hears — yes," answered Mothril. "The King Don Pedro addressed himself at first to his Moorish archers, who besought him to consider that the sacrilege would be even greater if he should employ infidels to accomplish such a profanation, and Don Pedro comprehended their scruples. He then addressed himself to the Christians, who accepted the task. But what would you, sir knight? All religions are full of such contradictions, and those which have the fewest are the best."

"Do you mean to say, infidel that you are," exclaimed the Grand Master, "that the religion of the Prophet is greater than the religion of Christ?"

"No, illustrious Grand Master. I would not intimate such a thing; and God forbid that a poor atom of dust like myself should have an opinion upon such a matter. No, at present I am merely relating the adventures of Madame Blanche de Bourbon, as the French call her, Doña Bianca, as she is called by the Spaniards."

"Invulnerable always," murmured Don Frederic.

"Moreover," Mothril continued, "the guards went so far as to commit this horrible sacrilege. They were about to seize Doña Bianca, when a knight, completely incased in iron armor, his visor lowered, doubtless the same unknown knight who had aided the prisoner to flee, rushed on horseback through the church."

"On horseback!" exclaimed Agénor.

"Yes, certainly," said Mothril. "It was a profanation, but possibly this knight was one whose name, whose rank had given him this right, or perhaps some military order had given it to him. There are several privileged orders of this sort in Spain. The Grand Master of St. James, for instance, has the right of entering, spurred and helmeted, any church in Christendom. Is not that so, Don Frederic?"

"Yes," answered Don Frederic, in a hollow voice, "that is the truth."

"Very well," continued the Moor. "This knight entered the church, drove forth the guards, called all the town to arms. At his voice the entire town revolted, chased out the king's soldiers, and closed the gates."

"But since then the king, my brother, is avenged," said Don Frederic. "And the two and twenty heads that fell in the public square at Toledo have won for him that true title he has received, — the Just."

"Yes, but among those twenty-two heads was missing that of the rebellious knight, for no one knew who he was."

"And what did the king do with Doña Bianca?" asked Agénor.

"Doña Bianca was sent to the castle of Xeres, where she is still held a prisoner, although she merits a greater punishment perhaps than that of imprisonment."

"Sir Moor," said Don Frederic, "it is not for us to decide what recompense or what suffering they merit, whom God has placed at the head of a nation. There is no one save God over them, and God alone can punish or reward them."

"His lordship speaks truly," answered Mothril, crossing his hands upon his breast, and bowing so low

that his head almost touched his horse's neck. "His humble slave should not have spoken thus."

Just then they reached the spot where they were to halt for the night, and they began to pitch their tents.

As the Moor withdrew to aid in the descent of his litter, Don Frederic drew near the knight.

"Never speak to me again," he said vehemently, "of anything that concerns the king or Doña Bianca or myself before this accursed Moor, who makes me long, every moment, to throw him to my dog to strangle. Speak to me no more until the evening meal, for then we shall be alone, and we can converse at leisure. And Mothril the Moor will be compelled to leave us alone. He does not eat with Christians. Besides he has his litter to watch."

"And does his litter conceal a treasure?"

"Yes," answered Frederic, smiling. "You are not mistaken. His treasure is concealed there."

Just then Fernando approached. Agénor had been guilty of so many indiscretions already that he feared to commit more, but his curiosity was only the keener for having been repressed.

Fernando approached to take his master's orders, for Don Frederic's tent was to be erected in the centre of the camp.

"Serve us, my good Fernando," said the prince to the young man, "for the knight must be hungry and thirsty."

"I will return," said Fernando. "You know that I have promised never to leave you, and you remember to whom I have promised it?"

A fugitive crimson came to the young man's lips. "Remain with us, child," he said, "for I have no secrets from you."

The repast was served in the Grand Master's tent. Mothril was not present.

"And now that we are alone," said Agénor, — "for it seems as though we are alone, as you said yourself that you have no secrets from this young man, — tell me, dear knight, all that has happened, that I may never in the future be guilty of such an offence as that which was mine a while ago."

Don Frederic glanced uneasily about him.

"A wall of canvas is but a weak one to guard a secret," said he. "It would be easy enough to hear through such a wall, or to look under it."

"Then," said Mauléon, "speak of other things. Despite my very natural curiosity, I will wait. And besides, though Satan himself take it in hand to hinder us, we shall surely find somewhere between this place and Seville, a moment to exchange a few words without fear."

"If you were not so fatigued," said Don Frederic, "I would have invited you to leave my tent, and come with me for a while, on foot, each armed with his good sword and wrapped in his mantle, accompanied by Fernando. We could find some spot on the plain so exposed that we might be certain the Moor, fifty paces from us, could not hear us, even though he were to change himself into a serpent, his original form."

"Seigneur," said the knight, with a smile which revealed the vigor and the inextinguishable confidence of youth, "often have I chased the izard on the highest peaks of our mountains. When I returned in the evening, my noble tutor, Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe, would say to me, 'Agénor, a bear's footprints have been seen. I know his tracks. Do you wish to come and hunt him with me?' I paused long enough only to put

down the game I had carried, and whatever the hour might be, I set forth again in pursuit."

"Let us go, then," said Frederic.

They removed helmets and cuirasses, and wrapped themselves in their mantles, not so much on account of the night air which is always cold among the mountains, but because they wished to remain unrecognized. Leaving their tents, they made their way in the direction which would soonest conduct them to some distance from the camp.

The dog wished to follow them; but Don Frederic made a gesture which the intelligent animal understood, and he lay down at the door of the tent. He was so well known by everybody that he would have betrayed the incognito of the two friends.

After taking a few steps they were stopped by a sentinel.

"Who is this soldier?" demanded Don Frederic, taking a step backwards.

"It is Ramon, the cross-bowman," answered the page. "I desired that your lordship's couch should be well guarded, and I have stationed a line of sentinels. I promised to keep watch over you, you know."

"Then tell him who we are," said the Grand Master, "since there is no danger in revealing our names."

Fernando approached the sentinel, and pronounced a single word in an undertone. The man lowered his cross-bow, retired to a respectful distance, and allowed the pedestrians to pass.

But scarcely had they gone fifty paces when they saw a white and motionless form, outlined in the darkness. The Grand Master, not recognizing this phantom, for phantom it seemed, walked directly towards it. He saw a second sentinel, enveloped in a cloak, who

lowered his lance, and said in Spanish, but with the guttural accent of an Arab, —

"No one can pass."

"And who is this?" asked Frederic of Fernando.

"I do not know," answered Fernando.

"Then he was not placed here by you?"

"No, for he is a Moor."

"Let us pass," said Don Frederic in Arabic.

The Moor shook his head, and continued to present the large, keen point of his halberd to the Grand Master's breast.

"What does this mean? Am I a prisoner? I, the Grand Master? I, a prince? Ho, my guards! Hither!"

And for his part Fernando drew a golden whistle from his pocket, and whistled.

But before the guards, or even the sentinel, fifty paces in the rear of the pedestrians, could appear, Don Frederic's dog, recognizing his master's voice, and understanding that he called for aid, came bounding towards him, bristling, and with one spring, that of a tiger, threw himself upon the Moor, and caught him so rudely by the throat, through the folds of his cloak, that the soldier fell, uttering a cry of alarm.

At this cry of distress, Moors and Spaniards came forth from the tents, the Spaniards each holding a torch in one hand, a sword in the other, the Moors in silence, bearing no lights, gliding through the darkness like birds of prey.

"Here, Allan!" cried the Grand Master.

The dog at that voice slowly relinquished his prey, as if with regret, and went backward, his eyes still fixed upon the Moor, who raised himself upon one knee. The dog placed himself at his master's feet, ready to spring again at a sign from him.

At this moment Mothril arrived. The Grand Master turned towards him with that twofold majesty, which was not merely the sign-patent of his birth, but which sprang from the heart as well.

"And who," he asked, "has placed sentinels in my camp? Answer, Mothril. This man belongs to you. Who has placed him here?"

"In your camp, seigneur?" repeated Mothril, with the deepest humility. "Oh, such audacity as that could never be mine! I merely ordered this faithful servant whom you see here," and Mothril pointed to the Moor, bent on one knee, and holding his bloody throat with both hands, "to stand guard, fearing some nocturnal surprise, and he has exceeded my orders, and did not recognize your lordship; but in any case, if he has offended my king's brother, and the offence is deemed worthy of death, he shall die."

"No," said Don Frederic, "evil intent alone makes crime; and since your intention was a good one, Seigneur Mothril, it is I who owe him compensation for the injuries my dog's zeal has inflicted. Fernando, give your purse to this man."

Fernando approached the wounded man with repugnance, and tossed him a purse, which he took.

"Now, Seigneur Mothril," said Don Frederic, with the air of a man who does not admit the least opposition to his will, "thanks for your solicitude, but it was quite needless. My guards and my sword suffice to defend me. Use your sword to protect yourself and your litter; and now that you know I have no further need for you or yours, return to your tent, Seigneur Mothril, and sleep in peace."

The Moor bowed, and Don Frederic passed on.

Mothril allowed him to withdraw to some distance,

and when he saw that the figures of the prince, the knight, and the page were lost in the darkness, he approached the sentinel.

"Are you wounded?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes," answered the sentinel sullenly.

"Dangerously?"

"The teeth of that cursed animal went the whole length of my throat."

"Are you suffering?"

"Yes."

"Enough to wish for revenge?"

"He who has revenge suffers no longer. Command me!"

"I shall do so when it is time. Come."

And both re-entered the camp.

While Mothril and the wounded soldier were entering the camp, Don Frederic, accompanied by Agénor and Fernando, plunged into the gloomy region against which the Sierra Estrella was outlined on the horizon. From time to time the keen-scented dog cast a glance around him, and if they had been followed, he certainly would have warned his master of the presence of a spy.

As soon as Don Frederic believed that they were too far away for the sound of his voice to reach the camp, he paused and placed his hand on the knight's shoulder.

"Listen, Agénor," he said, and there was that deep ring in his voice that proved it came from the heart. "Speak to me no more of that one whose name you pronounced to-day, for if you speak of her before strangers, it will make the blood leap to my face and my hand tremble; and if you speak of her when we are alone, you will cause my soul to falter. This is all I can tell you now. The most unhappy Doña Bianca did not know how to win the good graces of her royal

husband. To the pure and gentle Frenchwoman he preferred Maria Padilla, the proud and ardent Spaniard. A whole lamentable history of distrust, of war, of blood, is concealed in these few words. Some day, if there is need of it, I will speak further. But until then remember, Agénor, speak of her to me no more. I think of her only too often, though none speak of her."

At these words Frederic enveloped himself in his mantle, as if to guard from every one, and bury within himself, an infinite sorrow.

Agénor grew thoughtful in the Grand Master's presence. He tried to recall memories, to penetrate those portions of his friend's secret where he might be of use to him, and he understood so much of it that the appeal made him by the other did not seem strange.

The Grand Master understood what was passing in Agénor's heart.

"This I would say also, friend," he added. "Henceforth you are to live with me, and as I need not be on my guard against my brother, without my ever speaking to you of her, without your speaking of her, you will at last sound this abyss which appalls even myself; but at present we are going to Seville. Fêtes and tourneys await me. The king, my brother, desires to do me honor, he says; and in proof he has sent me, as you have seen, his counsellor and friend, Don Mothril."

Fernando shrugged his shoulders, a motion that signified both scorn and hatred.

"And I obey," continued Don Frederic, as if in response to some thought of his own. "But in leaving Coimbra, I have had misgivings, misgivings which the surveillance exercised over me has only confirmed. I shall be on my guard. I have not two eyes merely. I

have also those of my devoted servant, Fernando; and if he should leave me upon some secret and absolutely necessary mission, you will remain, for I love one of you as dearly as the other."

And to each of the young men Don Frederic extended a hand. One, Agénor laid respectfully on his heart; the other, Fernando covered with kisses.

"Seigneur," said Mauléon, "I am happy in loving, and in being so much loved, but I am come too late to bear my full part in so great a friendship."

"You shall be our brother," said Don Frederic. "You shall enter our heart, as though that heart were your own; but meanwhile, let us speak only of the fêtes and fine tiltings that await us at Seville. Come, let us return to the camp."

Behind the last tent they passed, Don Frederic found Mothril awake and bestirring himself.

He paused and looked at the Moor, unable to conceal the annoyance which this apparent obsession caused him.

"Seigneur," said the former to Don Frederic, "observing that no one is asleep in the camp, the thought just occurred to me, as the days are so hot, would it please Your Highness to resume the journey? The moon has risen. The night is calm and glorious. By setting out at once, you may curtail somewhat the impatience of the king, your brother."

"Let us go, then. I am quite willing," said Don Frederic. "Give orders for departure."

While the horses and mules were saddled and the tents lifted, Mothril approached the wounded sentinel, and asked of him, —

"If we make ten leagues to-night, shall we then have crossed the first chain of mountains?"

"Yes," answered the soldier.

"And if we start to-morrow at seven o'clock in the evening, at what hour shall we reach the ford of La Zezera?"

"At eleven o'clock."

At the hour mentioned by the soldier they arrived at the place where they were to encamp. This way of travelling, as the Moor had foreseen, was agreeable to every one, and by this means the Moor especially had been able to withdraw his litter from the curious gaze of Musaron.

For one desire possessed the worthy squire, and that was to learn what the treasure might be which Mothril guarded so carefully in that gilded box.

And, true child of France that he was, he concerned himself but little with the unreasonable demands of the new climate in which he lived, and proceeded to prowl about the tents when the heat of the sun was most intense.

Its rays fell perpendicularly. Everything was deserted in the camp. Frederic had retired to his tent, that he might be completely alone with his thoughts. Fernando and Agénor were conversing in their tent, when suddenly they beheld Musaron upon the threshold. The squire wore the smiling face of one who has at last almost attained the long sought object of his quest.

"Seigneur Agénor," said he, "a great discovery!"

"And what may it be?" asked the knight, accustomed to the facetious sallies of his squire.

"Don Mothril talks to his litter, and his litter answers."

"And what do they say to each other?"

"Well, I heard that too," said Musaron; "but I was not able to understand, for you see the Moor and his litter spoke Arabic."

The knight shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you say to this, Fernando?" he asked. "If Musaron may be believed, this treasure of Don Mothril's can speak."

"There is nothing so surprising in that," answered the page, "for Don Mothril's treasure is a woman."

"Ah!" said Musaron, abashed.

"Young?" asked Agénor, quickly.

"Probably so."

"Beautiful?"

"Ah, you ask too much of me, sir knight. That, I believe, is a question which few people even in Don Mothril's suite itself could answer."

"Very well! I will discover for myself," said Agénor.

"How so?"

"How so? If Musaron reached the tent itself, I can surely gain an entrance. We huntsmen of the mountains are accustomed to slip from crag to crag, surprising the mountain goat, at the very summit of our peaks. Seigneur Mothril cannot be more suspicious or keener than they."

"So be it," said Fernando, in his turn carried away by a wild impulse of youth, "but on one condition. I am to go with you!"

"Come; while we are gone, Musaron will watch."

Agénor was not mistaken, and in fact so many precautions were scarcely necessary. It was eleven o'clock in the morning. The burning sun of the desert shed its hottest rays. The camp appeared to be forsaken. The Spanish and Moorish sentinels had sought the shade of some isolated tree or rock, and except for the tents, which gave the country the appearance of being inhabited for the time, the traveller might have believed himself in a desert.

Mothril's tent was the farthest away from them. In order to isolate it completely, and also perhaps to make it cooler, it was propped against a cluster of trees. In this tent he had placed his litter, and before the entrance fell a large hanging of some Turkish stuff, which prevented the glance from penetrating to the interior.

Musaron pointed to this tent as being the one which concealed the treasure. While they left Musaron in the place where he had stationed himself, from which point he could see everything that occurred on the side of the tent facing the camp, the two young men took a roundabout route, and won the extremity of the grove. Having reached this point, they held their breath, slackened their pace, and carefully turning aside the branches, whose rustling would have revealed their presence, they advanced, and without being heard by Mothril, they reached at last the circular canvas, in the centre of which were the Moor and his litter.

They could see nothing, but they could hear.

"Oh!" said Agénor, "we shall not be much the wiser for their conversation, for they are talking Arabic."

Fernando laid his finger upon his lips. "I understand Arabic," he said. "Let me listen."

The page listened, and Don Agénor awaited in silence.

"It is strange," said Fernando, after a moment's attention; "they are speaking of you."

"Of me?" said Agénor. "Impossible!"

"Yet a fact. I am not mistaken."

"And what do they say?"

"Don Mothril only has been talking thus far. He asked just now, 'Is it the knight with the red plume?'"

At the same moment was heard one of those melodious and vibrant voices, which cause an echo in the

heart, and, when they speak, seem to drop amber and pearls. The voice answered, —

"Yes, it is the knight with the red plume. He is young and beautiful."

"Young, very likely," answered Mothril. "But beautiful? No, I cannot agree to that."

"He carries his armor well, and seems to be brave."

"Brave? a plunderer, a vulture of the Pyrenees, who has come to batten upon the corpse of our beloved Spain."

"What did he say?" asked Agénor.

The page repeated Mothril's words with a smile.

A flush mounted to the knight's face. His hand clasped the hilt of his sword, and he drew it half way from the scabbard. Fernando arrested this movement.

"Seigneur," he said, "this is the reward of eavesdropping. Doubtless my turn will come. Listen."

The gentle voice continued, still conversing in Arabic, —

"This is the first French knight I have ever seen. You must pardon me some slight curiosity. French knights, every one avows, are famed for their courtesy. Is this knight in the service of Don Pedro, the king?"

"Aïssa," said Mothril, his voice full of concentrated rage, "speak to me no more of this young man."

"It was yourself who first spoke to me of him," answered the voice, "when we met him in the mountains; yourself who, after promising that we should halt under the trees which we had just reached, exhorted me, weary though I was, to endure still greater fatigue that we might reach Coimbra before the French knight should have an opportunity of speaking with Don Frederic."

Fernando placed his hand upon the knight's shoulder.

It seemed to him that the veil which had hidden the Moor's secret was rent, and the secret itself revealed.

"What is he saying?" asked the knight.

Fernando repeated, word for word, Mothril's speech.

Meanwhile the voice continued with an accent that penetrated the knight's heart, although he could not understand the meaning of the words.

"If he is not valiant," said she, "why then do you appear to fear him so much?"

"I suspect every one, but fear no one," said the Moor. "Furthermore, it seems quite useless to me for you to bestow thought upon a man whom very soon you will see no more."

Mothril had pronounced these last words in a voice which left no doubt as to their meaning, and Agénor understood by the sudden movement of the page that he had just discovered something of importance.

"Be on your guard, Sir Agénor," said he. "Whether for some political cause or through jealous hate, I know not, but you have an enemy in Don Mothril."

Agénor smiled disdainfully. Both began to listen again, but heard no more. Some seconds afterwards they saw, through the trees, the figure of Don Mothril. He had left his tent, and was on his way to Don Frederic's.

"Methinks," said Agénor, "that this is just the moment to see and speak with this fair Aïssa, who has so much sympathy for the knights of France."

"See her, yes," answered Fernando, "but do not speak with her. For, rest assured, Mothril has not departed without leaving guards at the entrance of his tent."

And with the point of his sword he made an opening in the tent, which, though very small, was large enough to permit the eye to view the interior.

Aïssa was reclining upon a couch, covered with purple stuff, embroidered with gold. She was buried in one of those mute and smiling reveries characteristic of the women of the Orient, whose entire life is made up of physical sensations. One of her hands held a musical instrument, known as a guzla. The other was half hidden in her black tresses sown with pearls, bringing into stronger relief her fine tapering fingers, the nails reddened with carmine. From beneath their silken lashes, her moist eyes darted a prolonged glance, as if they were riveted upon some object visible only in thought.

"How fair she is!" murmured Agénor.

"Seigneur," said Fernando, "remember this. She is the daughter of a Moor, and therefore an enemy of our holy religion."

"Bah!" said Agénor. "I will convert her."

At this moment they heard a light cough from Musaron. This was the signal of warning agreed upon if any one should approach the woods, and, with precautions like those which they had taken in approaching the tent, they returned by the same road over which they had come. As they reached its end, they saw upon the road which leads to Seville a small band of Arabian and Castilian horsemen. They went directly towards Mothril, who, having perceived them, had paused a few steps from the Grand Master's tent. They had come in behalf of Don Pedro, the king, and brought a fresh despatch to his brother. This message was accompanied by a letter for Mothril. The Moor read the letter intended for him, and entered Don Frederic's tent, inviting the new-comers to wait one moment in case the Grand Master should desire some explanation.

"What! again?" said Don Frederic, perceiving Mothril at the threshold of his tent.

"Seigneur," said the Moor, "what emboldens me to enter your presence is a message from our honored king, addressed to you, which I desired to deliver into your hands without delay."

And he presented the letter to Don Frederic, who took it with a certain hesitation. But at the first lines he read, the Grand Master's face brightened.

The despatch read: —

"My well-loved brother, hasten, for already my court is filled with knights from every nation. Seville rejoices in the expectation of the arrival of the valiant Master of St. James. Whomsoever you bring with you shall be welcome, but do not delay your march with a long retinue. I shall be proud to see you; my happiness lies in seeing you speedily."

At this moment entered Fernando and Agénor, who felt some uneasiness at sight of this new troop directing its way towards Don Frederic's tent.

"See," said Don Frederic, extending the king's letter to Agénor. "Read, and see what reception we shall have."

"Will not Your Highness speak some words of welcome to those who brought this letter?" asked Mothril.

Don Frederic made a sign of assent and left the tent. Then, when he had thanked them for the promptness they had shown, for he had just learned that they had come from Seville in five days, Mothril addressed the chief.

"I will keep these soldiers," he said, "to do greater honor to the Grand Master. As for you, return to the King Don Pedro, with the swiftness of the swallow,

and say to him that the prince is on the way to Seville."

Then in a lower tone he added, —

"Go, and tell the king that I shall not return without the proof I promised him."

The Arab horseman bowed, and without answering, without pausing to refresh himself or his horse, he departed, swift as an arrow.

This injunction, given in an undertone, had not escaped the attention of Fernando, and although he was ignorant of its object, he believed that he ought to tell his master that he suspected the departure of the chieftain so soon after his arrival, and all the more because the chief was a Moor, and not a Castilian.

"Listen," said Frederic, when they were alone. "The danger, if there be any, does not menace me, or you, or Agénor. We are strong men, who do not fear danger; but in the castle of Medina Sidonia is a being defenceless and feeble, a woman who has already suffered too much for me, and because of me. You must go; you must leave me. By some means or other the choice of which I leave to your own adroitness, you must reach her in time to give her warning that she must be upon her guard. All that I cannot say to her in a letter, you must tell her with your own voice, and in person."

"I will set out whenever you wish," said Fernando.

Frederic seated himself at a table, wrote some lines upon a parchment, and sealed them with his seal. As he finished, the inevitable Moor entered his tent again.

"You observe," said Don Frederic, "that I too am writing to the King Don Pedro. It seemed to me, I gave his letter too cold a reception in intrusting your messenger merely with a verbal response to it. Fernando will set out to-day or to-morrow."

The Moor bowed without answer. In his presence the Grand Master placed the parchment in a little bag embroidered with fine pearls, and handed it to the page.

"You know what is to be done?" he said.

"Yes, monseigneur, I know."

"But," said Mothril, "since Your Highness would advance the French knight, why not send him instead of your page, so necessary to you? I will give him an escort of four of my men, and in delivering to the king this letter, a letter from his brother, he will have merited at the first stroke the good graces which you are so desirous of soliciting for him."

The astuteness of the Moor embarrassed Don Frederic for an instant, but Fernando came to his aid.

"It seems to me," he said to Don Frederic, "it seems to me that a Spaniard ought to be sent to the King of Castile. Besides, I was the one Your Highness chose first, and unless I receive absolute orders from you, I desire to keep the honor of this mission for myself."

"It is well!" said Don Frederic. "We will not alter that which we have decided upon."

"Monseigneur is master!" said Mothril; "and all of us have no other pleasure than that of executing his commands. I await them now."

"What commands?"

"For our departure. Was it not decided that we should travel by night as we did yesterday? Your Highness was not disturbed by this nocturnal march?"

"Quite the contrary."

"Very well! We have only an hour or two more of daylight," resumed Mothril, "and then it will be time to set forth."

"Give orders. I shall be ready."

Mothril departed.

"Listen," said Don Frederic to Fernando. "We must cross the river which descends from the Sierra Estrella, and then plunges into the Tagus. At the time of fording the stream there are always some moments of confusion. You will take advantage of this, once arrived on the opposite bank, to escape immediately, for I think you are no more anxious to accept the escort which the Moor has offered than I am. But be prudent during this expedition, and be still more prudent when you reach the journey's end, for you know that she is rigorously watched."

"Yes, monseigneur, I know it."

Mothril did not lose a moment in giving the necessary orders. The caravan resumed its march, following the usual order. An advance-guard of Moorish cavalry reconnoitred the road. Don Frederic came after, watched by Mothril, and last of all the litter with the rear-guard.

Towards ten o'clock they reached the Sierra, and descended again into the valley. An hour afterwards, through the trees which grew on the mountain's slope, they saw a bluish band, like a long and winding ribbon. This flashed in a million places, where the light of the moon touched it.

"We have reached La Zezera," said the Moor. "With the permission of Your Highness, I will go and sound the ford."

This gave Don Frederic an opportunity to remain alone for a moment with Fernando and Agénor. He was only too eager to give the Moor permission to leave, and bowed his assent.

Mothril, we know, never travelled without his litter. He took a roundabout route to the rear-guard, and then

advanced, accompanying that treasure which had occupied so much of Musaron's attention before he knew what the nature of it might be.

"It is my turn to ask permission of Your Highness," said Agénor. "We Frenchmen, you know, are used to fording rivers when we find them. I wish to arrive at the opposite bank of the river at the same time the Moor does."

This gave Don Frederic another opportunity to give his parting instructions to Fernando, unheard by any one.

"Do as you think best," said he to the knight; "but do not expose yourself unnecessarily. You know that I shall have need of you."

"Monseigneur," said Agénor, "we shall meet on the opposite bank."

And in an opposite direction from that taken by the Moor and his litter, and also by a roundabout way, the knight disappeared in the windings of the mountain, accompanied by Musaron.

V.

THE FORDING OF THE RIVER.

THE Moor, the first to leave, was also the first to reach the river's edge.

Doubtless, either in coming or during some other journey, he had sounded the stream which he was now reconnoitring; for he descended to the river-bank without the slightest hesitation, his body half concealed by the oleanders, which, in the southern part of Spain and Portugal, border nearly every river. At a sign from him, the bearers of the litter took the mules by their bridles, and Mothril having indicated to them the road they were to follow, which was rendered an easier matter still by the position of a small orange grove extending in this direction, they descended into the river and began to cross it, — an operation which was accomplished without the water reaching any higher than the bellies of the mules.

In spite of Mothril's certainty with regard to the safety of the stream, his eyes never ceased to follow the direction taken by the bearers of the litter, until he saw that precious burden borne safely to the other bank.

And then only he glanced about him, bending until he was no higher than the oleanders.

"Are you there?" he asked.

"Yes," answered a voice.

"Will you recognize the page?"

"Yes; it was he who whistled to the dog."

"The letter is in a bag which he carries hung at his side in a small pouch. It is that pouch I desire."

"You shall have it," answered the Moor.

"Then I may call him? You are ready?"

"I shall be, when the time comes."

Mothril climbed the bank again, and returned to Don Frederic and Fernando.

During this time Agénor and Musaron had also reached the river's edge, and the knight, who, as he had said, was not at all dismayed by the water's depth, bravely plunged his horse into the current.

The river was shallow at the banks; the knight and his squire therefore made their way through it slowly and by degrees. When they had gone three-fourths of the way Agénor's horse slipped, but, held by the bridle and caressed by his master, plunged on vigorously, and regained his footing twenty paces from the spot where he had lost it. Musaron followed his master as closely as his shadow, and, after having performed almost the same manœuvre, arrived like him safe and sound on the other bank. As usual, he was about to congratulate himself in no low voice at all this prowess, but his master, laying a finger upon his lips, motioned him to be silent. Both had reached the bank without having caused any other sound to be heard than the light splashing of water. There was no sign of their presence to reveal to Mothril that the knight had forded the river. Once arrived there, Agénor paused, alighted, gave his horse's bridle into Musaron's hands, and then, describing a circular path, he reached the other extremity of the orange grove, and facing it he saw the gilded carving of the litter, brought into relief by a ray of moonlight which played upon it; and even if he had not known where it was, he could have found it easily; for the vibrations of

the guzla resounded through the night, indicating that Aïssa, seeking to distract her thoughts while waiting for her guardian to cross the stream, had called her instrument to her aid. At first only disconnected chords were heard, — a vague harmony uttered to the winds and the night through the wandering fingers of the musician. But these chords were followed by words which, though translated from the Arabic tongue, were sung in the purest Castilian. So the beautiful Aïssa knew Spanish. The knight would be able to speak to her. He continued to approach, guided this time by the music and the voice.

Aïssa had drawn the curtains of her litter on the side furthest from the river, and, doubtless in obedience to their master's orders, the two attendants who had borne it had retired some steps to the rear. The young girl was reclining in her palanquin, which was lighted by the bright rays of the moon; she followed its path in the cloudless sky. Her attitude, as is usual with children of the Orient, was full of natural grace, and profoundly voluptuous. She seemed to draw in through every pore each perfume which the warm wind from the south wafted from Ceuta towards Portugal. As for her song, it was an Oriental composition.

"It is the hour, the hushed still hour;
Staying at last his flight,
The nightingale from his lonely bower
Sings sweetly to the night.

"Late is the hour: the long day closes
And the pale stars gleam,
Whilst the dreaming Rose her sweets discloses
Unto the murmuring stream.

"The air is still, the waters listen, —
Silent and hushed are they;
And the far-off stars hear, as they glisten,
The nightingale's lone lay.

"He sang to the Rose: 'Why, O Flower of flowers,
Disclose thy sweets to the night?'
Then she: 'And why when evening lowers
Flood'st thou the world with delight?'

"He sang: 'My lays to a flower belong
That hides away from the sun.'
'All my fragrance for the bird whose song
Ascends when the day is done.'

"And the Rose to the bird did her heart discover
Ere the night was gone;
Perfume and song, the loved and the lover,
Were mingled, and made one."

When she had finished the last word, and as the last chords vibrated harmoniously in the air, the knight, unable to control his impatience any longer, appeared in the open space lighted by the moon's rays, between the grove and the litter. A Western woman, at seeing a man spring suddenly forth, would have screamed and called for help. The beautiful Moor did neither the former nor the latter. Supporting herself with her left hand, with the other she drew forth a small dagger which she carried in her girdle; but a moment later, when she recognized the knight, her head drooped upon one of her softly rounded hands, and, laying the other upon her lips, she motioned him to advance noiselessly. Agénor obeyed. The long draperies of the litter, and the caparisons which covered the mules, formed a sort of wall which rendered him invisible to the two guardians of the litter, who, moreover,

were otherwise employed in watching the preparations for the crossing of Fernando and Frederic on the opposite bank. Agénor grew bolder, came nearer to the young girl's hand, which lay outside the litter, and taking it, he pressed it to his lips and said, —

"Aïssa loves me and I love Aïssa!"

"Are there necromancers in your country," said she, "who can read in the hearts of women the secrets which they have breathed only to the night and to solitude?"

"No, we are no necromancers," said the knight, "but we know when love calls to love. Am I so unfortunate as to be mistaken?"

"You know very well that you are not," said the young girl. "Since I have travelled in Don Mothril's suite, guarded by him as though I were his wife and not his child, I have seen many a Moorish and many a Castilian knight pass by, and never once was tempted to raise my eyes from the pearls of my bracelet, my thoughts never once absent from my prayers. But it was not with you as with the others. From that first moment when I saw you in the mountains, I wanted to descend from my palanquin and follow. Be not astonished that I can speak to you thus. I was not reared in cities. I am the flower of solitude, and as the flower spends its perfume for him who plucks it, and then dies, so I give to you my love, if it is your desire, and if you do not desire my love, I must die."

Even as Agénor was the first man who had ever arrested the attention of the beautiful Moor, she was also for him the first woman; no other had ever before spoken so sweetly to his heart; words, glance, and gesture were all in harmony. He was about to reply to this strange avowal which unreservedly met his advances half-way, when suddenly a deep cry, full of pain, pierced the air;

it was a death-cry, and Agénor and the young girl trembled. At the same moment the Grand Master's voice was heard from the opposite bank, calling, —

"Help! help! Fernando is drowning."

With a sudden movement, the young girl almost sprang from her palanquin, touched the young man's forehead lightly with her lips, and uttered these few words: —

"I shall see you again?"

"By my soul, yes!" replied Agénor.

"Go then to the page's aid," she said, and pushed him from her with one hand, while she drew the curtains with the other.

In a few steps, by taking a short cut, the knight found himself once more at the river-side. In a moment he relieved himself of sword and spurs. Fortunately he was not in armor, and he hastened towards the spot where the disturbance of the water indicated that the page had disappeared.

This is what had happened. As we have already indicated, after the litter had crossed, having given his instructions to the Moor concealed in the oleanders, Mothril had returned to find the Grand Master and Fernando, who were waiting with the rest of the suite a short distance from the edge of the stream.

"Seigneur," said the Moor, "the ford is found, and as Your Highness can see, the litter has reached the other bank safely. But for the sake of the utmost precaution, I will myself conduct first your page, and then yourself, across the stream; my men will follow."

This offer was so completely in keeping with the Grand Master's wishes, that it did not enter his head to make the slightest objection. In fact, no other arrangement could make the plan decided upon by Fernando and Frederic easier of execution.

"It is well," he said to Mothril. "Fernando will cross first, and as he is to precede us on the road to Seville, he will continue on his way while the rest of us ford the river."

Mothril bowed, as a sign that he saw nothing to hinder the Grand Master's wish.

"Is there anything you desire to say to the King Don Pedro, my brother, at the same time?"

"No, monseigneur," answered the Moor; "my own messenger has gone, and will arrive before yours."

"It is well," said Don Frederic. "March on."

The Grand Master consecrated the brief space of time which was left, by a wise and tender exhortation to Fernando. He loved dearly this page who had entered his service when a mere child, and the young man was deeply attached to him. Young though he was, Don Frederic had not hesitated to make his page the confidant of the most intimate secrets of his life.

Mothril waited at the bank of the river. All was calm. The country was flooded with moonlight, intercepted by the great shadows cast by the mountains, with here and there the sparkling reflections of the river; it seemed a part of some fairy realm seen in a dream. The most suspicious nature would have been reassured by this silence, by the transparency of the night; even had he been warned, he would have refused to believe that danger was at hand.

And so Fernando, naturally brave and adventurous, as befitted his age, had not the slightest fear, and plunged his horse into the river, following Mothril's mule. Mothril led. For some distance neither the horse nor the mule went beyond its depth; but imperceptibly the Moor pressed towards the right.

"You are going out of your way, Mothril," cried Don

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Frederic from the bank. "Take care, Fernando, take care!"

"Do not fear, monseigneur," answered Mothril; "I am leading. If there is any danger, I shall be the first to perceive it."

This answer was plausible enough, and, although the Moor departed more and more from a straight path, Fernando had no misgivings. Moreover, his companion was perhaps changing his direction merely as a means of cutting the current with less difficulty.

The Moor's mule went beyond its depth, and Fernando's horse began to swim; but this mattered little to the page, for he could swim well enough himself to cross the river if compelled to resort to his own strength.

But the Grand Master continued to observe their passage with increasing uneasiness.

"You are out of your course, Mothril, you are out of your course. Keep to the left, Fernando."

But Fernando's steed was swimming vigorously, and he saw the Moor still ahead; he had not the slightest fear that he would not cross the stream in safety; it seemed mere play to him. He turned about in the saddle and answered his master, "Have no fears, monseigneur; I am following a safe path, for Seigneur Don Mothril is leading."

But as he made this movement a strange apparition rose before him: he actually believed that in the tracks his horse left behind him he had seen the head of a man, who had dived down suddenly the moment he turned about, but had not been quick enough to escape notice.

"Seigneur Mothril," he said to the Moor, "it seems that we are mistaken. This is not the spot where your litter passed, for by the moon's light I see it yonder, in front of that orange grove, quite at our left."

"It is not much deeper here," answered the Moor, "and in a few moments we shall be ashore again."

"But you are going farther and farther out of your way," continued Don Frederic; but he was so far off that his voice scarcely reached the boy.

"That is so," said Fernando, beginning himself to feel uneasy, as he saw the vain efforts of his horse, whom some mysterious force seemed to be carrying on into the current; while Mothril, quite able to control his mule, was some distance at his left.

"Seigneur Mothril," cried the page, "there is some treachery here."

Scarcely had he spoken the words when his horse neighed suddenly, and, bending on one side, lashed the water violently, but without swimming with the right leg as before. A moment later he neighed again with pain, and ceased to swim with the left leg; then, no longer able to support himself with his fore feet merely, the animal sank to his croup in the water.

Fernando saw that the moment had come for leaping into the river, but he attempted to leave the stirrups in vain; he felt that he was fastened to his horse.

"Help! help!" cried Fernando.

It was that agonized cry which Agénor had heard, — the cry which had awakened him from the ecstasy which had seized him at the sight of the beautiful Moor and the sound of her voice.

The horse continued to sink until the water was up to his nostrils; he snorted vigorously, while with his fore-legs he continued to splash water about him.

Fernando attempted to cry a second time for help, but, forced onward by that secret power which he had already uselessly attempted to resist, he followed his horse into the abyss; his hand alone, raised to Heaven as if demand-

ing aid or vengeance, moved for a moment above the waters, but, like the rest of his body, it soon disappeared. And then was seen only a whirling of waters, which rose to the surface, upon which there sparkled numerous bubbles reddened with blood.

Two friends had sprung to Fernando's aid: one, as we have already said, was Agénor; the other was the faithful mountain dog, who was accustomed to obey the voice of the page almost as promptly as though the latter had been his master.

But both friends sought in vain, although Agénor observed that the dog plunged two or three times in the same direction. After the third time, the animal reappeared, bearing a piece of cloth in his mouth and panting for breath; but, as if to show that he was unable to do more than to obtain this bit of cloth, he swam towards the bank, and, throwing himself at his master's feet, gave a mournful, despairing howl. The bravest heart at such a sound, piercing the stillness of the night, might tremble. This piece of cloth was all that remained of the unfortunate Fernando.

The night passed in fruitless quest. Don Frederic, who had crossed the river without accident, when his turn came, remained all night upon the bank. He could not make up his mind to tear himself away from the moving waters which had entombed his friend, whom he hoped at every moment to see emerging from them.

His dog howled at his feet. Agénor, thoughtful and gloomy, continued to hold the piece of cloth brought by the dog, and seemed to await, most impatiently, the dawn of day.

Mothril, for his part, remained for some time hidden in the oleanders, as if he were in search of the young man. Apparent despair was written on his face; he said repeat-

edly, "Allah! Allah!" and attempted to console the Grand Master with those commonplaces which lend to suffering an additional pang.

Day dawned, and its first gleam revealed Agénor seated at Don Frederic's feet. It was evident that the knight awaited this moment with impatience, for scarcely had the first rays of daybreak penetrated the opening of the tent, when he approached it, and examined most attentively the piece of cloth torn from the doublet of the unfortunate page.

This examination confirmed his fears beyond possibility of doubt, for he shook his head sorrowfully.

"This is most sad and most strange," he said.

"Yes," answered Frederic, "most sad and strange! Why has Providence inflicted such suffering as this upon me?"

"Monseigneur," said Agénor, "I do not think that Providence is to be accused of this. Look closely at this last relic of the friend you weep."

"I have looked at it and wept at sight of it only too often already," said Frederic.

"But do you notice nothing peculiar about it, seigneur?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the doublet of the unfortunate page was white as an angel's robe. I mean that the water of the river is limpid and clear as crystal, and yet, — look for yourself, monseigneur, — this cloth is tinged with red. There is blood upon it."

"Blood?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Allan was wounded in seeking to recover him he loved. There is blood upon his head also."

"I too thought at first as you do, monseigneur; but I have looked very carefully, and have not discovered the slightest wound. No, the blood is not the dog's."

"But may not Fernando have been thrown against some rock?"

"I plunged into the place where he disappeared, and all around there are more than twenty feet of water. But here is something that perhaps can be of some assistance to us. Look at this cut in the bit of cloth."

"It is the dog's teeth."

"No, no, monseigneur, for here is the spot where the dog bit, plain enough to be seen. The other hole was made by a sharp instrument, by the blade of a poniard."

"Oh, what a horrible idea!" exclaimed Don Frederic, rising, pale, his locks standing on end, fury and terror in his gaze. "Yet you are right, you are right! Fernando was an excellent swimmer. His horse, trained in my stud, has many a time crossed a far more rapid current than this. Agénor, there has been a crime committed,—a crime."

"I should not doubt it in the least, seigneur, if I could see a possible motive for one."

"Ah, true indeed! I had not told you that as soon as he reached this bank Fernando was to leave me,—not, however, to join the King Don Pedro, as I told the Moor, who did not believe me; he went upon an errand which I had intrusted to him. My poor friend! so faithful, so much to be depended upon! his heart beat only for me. Alas! it is through me, and for me, he has suffered death."

"It was his duty, it is the duty of us all, to die, if need be, for Your Highness."

"And who," murmured Don Frederic, in answer to some train of thought of his own, "who can tell what may be the terrible consequences which this death may cause?"

"If I am not your friend to the same extent that Fer-

nando was," said the knight sadly, "still, I would receive your confidence, and serve you as he has served you."

"You are right, Agénor," said the prince, extending his hand, and gazing at the other with an infinite tenderness strange to behold in the glance of such a man. "I have divided my heart: one part is for you, the other was for Fernando. Fernando dead, you are henceforth my only friend; and I will prove it by telling you what that mission was which Fernando had received from me. He was the bearer of a letter to your compatriot, to the Queen Doña Bianca."

"Ah! now we know the motive," said Agénor. "Where was this letter?"

"In the pouch which Fernando wore, hanging to his girdle. If he has really been assassinated, and I now believe as you do that he has been,—if his body has not drifted ashore at some lonely and deserted spot, but his assassins have found it, then my secret is discovered, and we are lost."

"And if so, monseigneur," exclaimed Agénor, "then go not to Seville. Flee! You are still near enough to Portugal to return in safety to your good town of Coimbra, and to place yourself in security behind its ramparts."

"Not go to Seville? that would be to abandon *her*. To flee would create suspicions which cannot exist if Fernando's death is merely accidental. And besides, Don Pedro will not relinquish his hold upon Doña Bianca, and through her he holds me. I will go to Seville."

"But in what way, then, shall I be able to serve you?" asked the knight. "Can I not replace Fernando? Can you not give me a letter similar to that given to him, a token by which I shall be recognized? *I* am not a child of sixteen years. Mine is not a doublet of delicate cloth

lined with silk, but a good cuirass; and it has repelled poniards more dangerous than the kanjiars and yataghans of your Moors. Give me the letter. I will arrive! and if it requires a week for any one else to reach her, she shall have your letter, I promise you, in four days."

"Thanks, my brave Frenchman! But if the king has already been warned, the danger is doubly great. No; the means I have employed was not wise, for God has not willed that it should succeed. Now let us be advised by circumstances. We will continue our route as if nothing had happened. When we are within two days' journey from Seville, and everything is forgotten, you will leave me, take a roundabout route, and when I enter Seville by one gate, you will enter by the other. Then in the evening you will steal into the king's Alcazar, where you will remain concealed in the outer court, which is shaded by majestic plane-trees, and in whose centre is a marble basin with lions' heads. You will observe some windows with purple hangings; those are my usual quarters when I am visiting my brother. At midnight come and stand beneath those windows. I shall know then, after my greeting from the King Don Pedro, what we may hope for, or fear. I shall speak to you. If I cannot speak, I shall throw you a letter which will inform you what is to be done; but promise me to execute immediately whatever I ask, whether it be spoken or written."

"Upon my soul I swear, monseigneur," said Agénor, "that your wish shall be accomplished in everything."

"It is well," said Don Frederic; "and now I am a little more tranquil. Alas! my poor Fernando!"

"Monseigneur," said Mothril, appearing at the threshold of the tent, "does Your Highness remember that we completed only half the distance we should have travelled last night? If it will please you to give orders for our

departure, in two or three hours we shall reach a forest, beneath whose shade we can rest. I know the place, for I halted there in coming, and there we can remain till the heat of the day has passed."

"Let us go," said Don Frederic; "nothing holds me here any longer, for I have lost all hope of seeing Fernando again."

And the caravan resumed its journey, the Grand Master and Agénor turning their eyes many times towards the river, repeating over and over again that exclamation, full of pain, which came from the heart, "Poor Fernando! Poor Fernando!"

And so Don Frederic continued upon his journey toward Seville.

VI.

HOW MOTHRIL ENTERED THE KING'S PRESENCE BEFORE THE GRAND MASTER.

THERE are cities which may justly claim their right to be enthroned over the countries that surround them. Nature has placed them where they may rule, and man has enriched them, and made them treasure-houses of beauty. Such a city is Seville, the queen of beautiful Andalusia, itself one of the royal provinces of Spain; and the Moors, who rejoiced to conquer it and guarded it lovingly, sorrowed at leaving it, for they left behind them that Eastern diadem which they had placed upon the brow of Andalusia three centuries before. In one of the palaces with which they had enriched that favorite sultana of theirs, dwelt Don Pedro, and it is thither we are about to transport our readers.

Upon a marble terrace about which orange and odorous citron-trees, pomegranates and myrtle, are so thickly overgrown that the sun's rays can scarcely pierce that shade, Moorish slaves wait until the burning rays of the sun have quenched their flames in the sea; then the evening breeze rises, and the slaves sprinkle the marble flaggings with benzoin and rose-water, and the zephyrs in passing bear into the air the natural and artificial perfumes mingled in one, as beauty blends with ornament. Beneath the shade formed by the hanging gardens of this second Babylon, Moorish slaves bring silken couches and soft cushions, for when night comes, Spain is revived; the freshness of the night causes streets, promenades, and terraces to be peopled again.

And now the tapestries which separate the terrace from a spacious apartment are lifted, and a man appears. Upon his arm leans a beautiful woman of twenty-four or twenty-five years; her hair is black and soft, her eyes dusky and velvety, her skin of that brown tint which belongs to the women of the South, even in the freshness of youth. The man, twenty-eight years of age, is, unlike his companion, blond, tall in figure; his blue eyes and his complexion, which even the Spanish sun could not bronze, show the indelible characteristics of the races of Northern Europe.

The woman is Doña Maria Padilla; the man is the King Don Pedro.

Both advanced silently beneath the canopy formed by the verdure overhead, and it was easy to observe that their silence was not caused from lack of matter, but because they were too full of their own thoughts.

The beautiful Spaniard bestowed scarcely a glance upon the Moors, who awaited her commands, or the wealth that surrounded her. Although born to mediocrity, almost misery, she had long been accustomed to royal luxury of the most dazzling sort, since she had played with the sceptre of Castile's king as a child toys with a rattle.

"Pedro," she said at last, the first to break a silence which neither seemed willing to interrupt, "you do wrong to profess that I am your friend, your honored mistress; my life is humiliation and slavery, nothing more, my lord."

Pedro's answer was an imperceptible movement of the shoulders; he smiled.

"Yes," repeated Maria, "absolute humiliation and slavery. I have said, and I repeat it."

"How so? explain," demanded the king.

"That is easily done, my lord. The Grand Master, they say, is coming to Seville to a tourney which you are preparing. His apartment is enriched at the expense of mine, decorated with the most precious tapestries and the most beautiful furniture, which have been brought from various chambers of the palace."

"He is my brother," said Don Pedro; and then in a tone comprehended only by himself, he added, "my *beloved* brother."

"Your brother!" she repeated. "I thought that he was the brother of Henry of Trastamare."

"Yes, madame; but they are both of them the children of Don Alphonso, my father."

"And therefore you would treat him royally. He scarcely deserves this honor, even although he is loved by a queen."

"I do not understand," said Don Pedro, paling in spite of himself, but betraying by no other sign than this involuntary pallor that the shaft had struck home.

"Ah, Don Pedro, Don Pedro!" said Maria Padilla; "either you are most blind or most philosophical."

The king did not answer; but with something affected in his manner, he turned towards the East.

"Well, what are you looking at?" asked the other impatiently; "is your 'beloved brother' come?"

"No, madame," answered Don Pedro. "I am looking to discover whether from this royal terrace, where we stand, we can see the towers of Medina Sidonia."

"Yes," answered Maria Padilla, "I know well. You were about to tell me what you always tell me, — that is to say, the faithless queen is a prisoner; and how has it happened that you, surnamed the Just, can punish the one and not punish the other? Why is the queen a prisoner, while her accomplice is loaded with honors?"

"What has my brother, Don Frederic, done to you, madame?" asked Don Pedro.

"If you had ever loved me, you could not ask that question; you would have avenged me. What has he done? He has pursued me, not with his hate, for hate at least may be mingled with respect; he has pursued me with his contempt; and you should punish whoever treats with contempt the woman who — though you do not love her, it is true — has shared your bed, the only one who has given you children."

The king did not answer. His was an impenetrable soul, and no one could read what thoughts were busy beneath that iron mask.

"Oh, how beautiful to boast of virtue where none is!" continued Maria Padilla, scornfully. "How easy for these same shrewd women to veil their shameless passions beneath the downcast glance, to shelter themselves from scandal, hiding behind the common verdict which presumes that these Gallic women are cold, insensible to feeling, compared with the daughters of Spain."

And still Don Pedro kept silence.

"Pedro, Pedro!" the mistress began again, irritated at seeing how the shafts of her sarcasm were powerless to penetrate the invulnerable sovereign, — "Pedro, you will do well to listen to the voice of your people. Do you not hear a voice that cries, 'Ah, Maria Padilla, the royal courtesan, the shame of an empire! — look at her, sinner and criminal! She has dared to love her prince, not for his title, for he is married, but for himself. While other women conspired against his honor, she sacrificed hers to him, counting upon his protection, his remembrance. Those he has espoused, — for Christian Pedro takes new wives unto himself as often as some Moorish sultan, — they, faithless to him, have remained barren; while

she has borne him two sons, whom she loves. O shameless one! Curse Maria Padilla as we have cursed La Cava. It is such women as these who bring kings and their people to perdition.' That is the voice of Spain. Do you hear it, Don Pedro?

"But were I queen, they would say: 'Unfortunate Maria, happier wert thou a maiden playing with other maidens, thy companions, on the bank of the Guadalupe. Thou wert happier ere the king stole thy peace away, making believe that he loved thee. Thy family was illustrious; thou couldst have chosen for thy husband among the first knights of Spain; thy weakness was in preferring a king. Poor child, without experience, who did not know that kings are not like other men! He has deceived thee, who hast never deceived him, even in thought, even in fancy. He has given his heart to other mistresses, forgetting thy fidelity, thy devotion, the children thou hast borne him.' Were I queen, they would say all this of me; they would accord me sainthood. Yes, I should be numbered among the saints. Is not that the title given to one woman I know, who has conspired to betray her husband's honor, and with his brother?"

Don Pedro's face had clouded by degrees. He passed his hand across his brow, and again appeared calm, almost smiling.

"To make an end, madame, what do you want? To be queen? You know that is impossible, for I am already married, — in fact, twice married. Ask of me that which is not impossible, and your wish shall be granted."

"I think I may ask that which Juana da Castro demands and obtains."

"Juana da Castro asks nothing, madame. 'T is necessity, that inexorable ruler of kings, who asks for her.

Her family is a powerful one, and, at the time when I made a foreign enemy in repudiating Blanche, it was necessary to make allies at home. Now do you wish that I should give my brother Frederic over to gaolers at the very moment when war threatens me, — when my other brother, Henry of Trastamare, has incited Aragon against me, has taken Toledo, is besieging Toro, which I shall be compelled to reconquer from my relatives with more labor than if I were reconquering Granada from the Moors? Do you forget for a moment that I, who hold others in imprisonment, was once a captive myself, obliged to dissimulate, to hide my head, to smile when I would have murdered, to grovel beneath the ambitious will of my mother; that it cost six months of dissimulation at one time to open to me the gate of my own palace for a minute; that I was compelled to flee to Segovia, to tear bit by bit from the hands of those who were in possession of it, the heritage which my father had left me; that I was obliged to poniard Garcilaso at Burgos, poison Albuquerque at Toro, cause twenty-two heads to fall at Toledo, and change my surname of the Just to that of the Cruel, unable to tell which of the two titles posterity will confer upon me? And, merely for a supposititious crime, I have relegated to Medina Sidonia, in almost complete loneliness, in poverty, perhaps, and despised, the woman whom it pleased you to see thus humiliated."

"Ah, not because it pleased me to see her thus humiliated," exclaimed Maria Padilla, her eyes aflame, "but because she had dishonored you."

"No, madame," said Don Pedro, "I am not dishonored; for I am not of those who would permit the honor or dishonor of a king to depend upon so fragile a thing as the virtue of a woman. All those circumstances which for other men are causes for joy or sorrow, are for us who

are kings merely political means for arriving at a far different end. No, I have not been dishonored by Queen Blanche; but I was forced to espouse her against my wish, and I seized the opportunity with which my brother's imprudence had furnished me. I have feigned terrible misgivings concerning them both; I have humiliated, I have degraded, a daughter of the first house of the Christian world. Therefore, if you loved me as you say, you should pray God that no misfortune come to me, for the regent, or rather the king, of France is her brother-in-law. He is a great prince, madame, with powerful armies, commanded by the first general of the day, — Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin."

"Ah, king! you are afraid," said Maria Padilla, preferring the king's anger to that cold impassibility which made Don Pedro, when master of himself, the most dangerous prince in the world.

"Yes, madame, I fear *you*," said the king. "For, thus far, you are the only one who has had power to make me commit the only errors which have been mine."

"It seems to me that a king who seeks his counsellors and agents among the Moors and among the Jews, should charge some other than the woman that he loves with his faults."

"Ah, you, you, also, have fallen into the common error," said Don Pedro, shrugging his shoulders. "My Moorish counsellors, my Jewish agents! Well, madame, I take counsel of intelligence everywhere, and draw my resources from wherever there is money. If you and those who accuse me will take the pains to glance about Europe, you will see that these same Moors have achieved civilization, these Jews have achieved wealth. Who built the mosque of Cordova, the Alhambra of Granada, and the alcazars which are the ornaments of

our cities, even the palace where we stand? Who did all this? The Moors.

"In whose hands is commerce and industry? In whose hands has been amassed the wealth of these indifferent nations? In the hands of the Jews. What is to be expected from our half-barbaric Christians? Tiltings and mighty combats, where the blood of the nations flows. But what do they accomplish, these foolish nations? Who flourish meanwhile, who sing and enjoy the life about them, undisturbed by the convulsions of the people? The Moors. And who descend upon their dead bodies to plunder them? The Jews. Now you perceive why the Moors and the Jews are indeed the very ministers and agents for a king who desires to be free, and independent of his neighbors. Well, that is what I have endeavored to be. That is what I have attempted for the last six years. It is that which has raised such hostility against me, and bred so many calumnies. Those who desired to be my ministers and to become my agents, have become my implacable enemies. I have nothing for them; I wish nothing of them, and I have banished them. But, on the contrary, you, Maria, I placed where you are. I have brought you as close to my throne as I could. I have given you that portion of my heart which a king has at his disposal. Above all, I have loved you, — I, whom you accuse of never having loved you."

"Ah, if you had loved me," answered Maria, with that feminine persistency which does not answer the arguments that refute its foolish accusations, but continues to answer its own thoughts, "if you had loved me, I should not be condemned to tears and shame, for having been devoted to my king; if you had loved me, I should be avenged."

"Good God!" said Don Pedro; "wait, and you shall be avenged, if there is need of it. Do you think that I carry Don Frederic close to my heart? Do you think that I would not be glad to find an occasion for making an end of that whole tribe of bastards? Very well; if Don Frederic has really insulted you, which I doubt,—"

"And was it not an insult," asked Maria Padilla, "was it not an insult," she repeated, pale with rage, "to advise you, as he has done, to discard me as your mistress, and to take back Queen Blanche as your wife?"

"And are you sure that he ever gave this counsel, Maria?"

"Yes, I am sure of it; as sure of it as of the fact that I live," said the Spaniard, with a gesture of menace.

"Then, my dear Maria," said Don Pedro, in that phlegmatic fashion which reduces to despair one who has given way to anger, "if Don Frederic counselled me not to keep you as mistress, and to take back Queen Blanche as wife, you err in accusing him of being the lover of this same Queen Blanche; for you must see, jealous though you are, that in that case, the lovers would be only too glad to avail themselves of the complete freedom which is left to a despised woman."

"You are too great an orator for me, Sire Pedro," answered Maria, rising, for it was impossible to contain her fury any longer. "I salute Your Majesty, and I will avenge my wrongs unaided."

Don Pedro's glance followed her, but he spoke not a word, he made not a single motion to recall her; and yet this woman was the only one who had ever caused him to experience any other sentiment than that of material passion satisfied. Just because of this, he feared his mistress as he would have feared an enemy. And so he

repressed the slight sentiment of pity, whose motions he felt deep in his heart; he stretched himself upon the cushions which Maria Padilla had just left, his eyes fixed upon the road to Portugal, for upon the balcony where the king was reposing, it was possible to see across the plain, the woods, or the mountains, the routes which led to different parts of the kingdom.

"Horrible necessity that governs kings," murmured Don Pedro. "I love that woman, and yet I dare allow neither her nor others to see that I love her. No one must see that, for if she once were aware of this love she would abuse it; no one must believe that he has sufficient power over the king to be able to wrest from him satisfaction for injuries, or any advantage whatever. And yet, no one must have it in his power to say, 'The queen insulted the king; the king knows this and does not avenge the insult.'

"Ah," continued Don Pedro, after a moment's silence, during which his face indicated all that was passing in his heart. "I am not lacking in a desire to be revenged, thank God; but if I should act too violently, my kingdom perhaps would be lost through that imprudent act of justice. As to Don Frederic, he is in my power, and the King of France has nothing to do with his life or death. But will he come? And if he does come, has he not had time enough to warn his accomplice?"

As he said these words, the king perceived upon the road leading to the Sierra Aracena a cloud of dust. It grew larger. Soon through this film, which became more transparent, he saw the white robes of the Moorish knights; then, walking beside the gilded palanquin, he recognized Mothril by his tall figure.

The little company advanced rapidly.

"Alone," murmured the king.

And when his glance had observed every figure in the group, from the first to the last, he murmured again, —

"Alone! What has become of the Grand Master? Has he perchance refused to come to Seville? Must he be sought in Coimbra?"

Meanwhile the company continued to advance.

And then it disappeared through the city gates. The king's eyes followed it; from time to time he saw it reappear, glistening in the tortuous streets of the town; then he saw it enter the Alcazar, and, leaning upon the balustrade, he was able to follow it through the courts; in a moment more the company would have reached its journey's end.

The Moor was absolutely free to enter the king's presence whenever he chose. After a few seconds he appeared upon the terrace, and found Don Pedro standing there, his gaze fixed upon the spot where he knew the Moor would first appear. His face was gloomy, and he did not attempt to conceal his disquietude in the least.

The Moor crossed his hands upon his breast, and almost touched the earth with his forehead. Don Pedro answered this salute merely with a gesture of impatience.

"The Grand Master?" said he.

"Sire," responded Mothril, "it seemed best to hasten my return to you. The grave interest of that which I have to impart will, I trust, cause Your Highness to listen to the voice of his faithful servant."

Don Pedro, though accustomed to penetrate the hearts of others, was too much preoccupied with exciting passions at this moment to notice the Moor's assumed embarrassment, and the cunning and caution that his words contained.

"The Grand Master?" he repeated, stamping his foot.

"My lord," answered Mothril, "he will come."

"Why have you left him? If he is not to blame, why does he not come of his own accord? And if he is guilty, why was he not brought by force?"

"My lord, the Grand Master is not innocent; yet he will come, rest assured. Perhaps he desires to flee; but he is watched by my men. They are leading him hither, rather than escorting him. If I have come before them, it is to speak to the king, not of that which has been done, but of what remains to be."

"Then he will come, — you are sure of that?"

"To-morrow evening he will be at the gates of Seville. I have come with all possible speed, as you see."

"Has any one been informed of his journey?"

"No one."

"You understand the importance of my question, and the weight that attaches to your answer?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well, and what news do you bring?" asked Don Pedro, a horrible weight pressing at his heart, although his face did not betray it, for it had assumed once more an expression of indifference.

"The king knows how jealous I am of his honor," said the Moor.

"Yes; and you know also, Mothril," said Don Pedro, frowning, "that insinuations upon this subject may pass when they come from Doña Padilla,— from a jealous woman to a lover who perhaps is too patient; but to the king from his minister all censure of the irreproachable conduct of Queen Blanche is forbidden. You know this, and if you have forgotten it, I repeat it."

"Sire," said the Moor, "a mighty monarch like yourself, happy, loving, beloved, finds no place in his heart either for envy or for jealousy. Your happiness is great,

my lord; but your happiness should not make you blind."

"This time you know something," said Don Pedro, fixing his keen gaze upon the Moor.

"My lord," the other replied coldly, "Your Majesty has doubtless reflected more than once upon the dangers by which you are surrounded; and your wisdom perhaps has led you to ask the question, 'What will become of the kingdom of Castile, since the king has no heirs?'"

"No heirs?" repeated Don Pedro.

"None that are legitimate, at least," continued the Moor; "so that if any misfortune should happen to you, the kingdom would belong to the bravest or the most fortunate of all the bastards, — to Henry, or to Frederic, or to Tello."

"Why these words, Mothril?" demanded Pedro. "Would you counsel a third marriage? The others have not borne such happy results that I should follow your counsel, I assure you, Mothril."

These words, forced from the depths of the king's soul by the violence of his anger, caused the Moor's eye to sparkle.

For they were a revelation of the tortures endured by Don Pedro, of all that agitated the hidden depths of his nature. Mothril knew half of what he wished to know; the other half a single word might reveal.

"My lord," said he, "why not let this third woman be one whose character has been tested, and whose fruitfulness is assured. Espouse Doña Maria Padilla, for instance, since you love her so much that you cannot bear to be separated from her, and her family is sufficiently good to permit of her becoming queen. By this means your sons will be legitimate, and then no one will have

claims which can dispute theirs to the throne of Castile."

Mothril had gathered up all the forces of his intellect to measure what should be the direction of attack. He would stake all upon a single throw; and with a delight not to be understood by other men, and known only by those lonely, ambitious spirits whose sweeping desire games with kingdoms for the stake, he watched the dark cloud of vexation that crossed his sovereign's brow.

"I have already annulled without result the marriage which allied me with the King of France," said Don Pedro. "I cannot break now the one which allies me with the House of Castro."

"Good!" murmured Mothril. "The more real love the heart holds, the greater the influence to be feared. There is one who may be supplanted, if not upon the throne, at least in the bed, of the King of Castile."

"And now, conclude," said Don Pedro. "You told me you had something of importance to impart."

"I bring you merely a piece of news which will free you from all further concern about France."

"This news, then! Speak quickly."

"Seigneur," said Mothril, "permit me to descend long enough to give some orders to the guardians of yonder litter below. I am uneasy, for I have left alone there one who is most dear to me."

Don Pedro gazed at him in surprise.

"Go," he said, "and return quickly."

The Moor descended, and ordered that the litter be brought into the inner court.

Don Pedro from the terrace above followed as well as he could the movements of his minister. Mothril reappeared a few moments later.

"My lord," said he, "will Your Highness accord to me, as usual, lodging in the Alcazar?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Then permit me to bring the occupant of the litter also."

"A woman?" asked Don Pedro.

"Yes, my lord."

"A slave whom you love?"

"Sire, my daughter."

"I did not know that you had a daughter, Mothril."

Mothril did not answer. Doubt and curiosity entered the king's mind together. This was what the Moor desired.

"Now," said Don Pedro, the importance of the situation causing him to return to the affair of which he wished to be informed, "tell me what you know concerning Queen Blanche."

VII.

HOW THE MOOR RELATED TO THE KING DON PEDRO WHAT HAD PASSED.

THE Moor approached the king, and, his features feigning an expression of the profoundest compassion, — in other words, the emotion which he knew would wound Don Pedro most, on the part of an inferior, — said, —

"Sire, before beginning this story, it is necessary that Your Highness should recall minutely the orders which you yourself gave me."

"Continue," said Don Pedro. "I never forget what I have once spoken."

"The king ordered me to repair to Coimbra, to inform the Grand Master that Your Highness awaited him, and to hasten my departure. I repaired thither, informed him, and did not rest an hour. The very day of our arrival we again set out upon our journey."

"Very well, very well," said Don Pedro. "I know that you are a faithful servant, Mothril."

"Your Highness added, 'Watch closely, that the Grand Master gives no one information of his departure.' Well, the very day we left, — but, in truth, I scarcely know whether, against the orders of Your Highness, I ought to inform you of what has passed."

"Speak. The day of your departure — "

"The Grand Master wrote a letter."

"To whom?"

"The person to whom Your Highness feared he might write."

"To Queen Blanche?" exclaimed Don Pedro, growing pale.

"To Queen Blanche, sire."

"Moor," exclaimed Don Pedro, "consider how grave such an accusation as this is!"

"I consider only how I may best serve my king."

"But you can add that you have been mistaken."

"I am not mistaken."

"Have a care! This letter, I want it!" exclaimed Don Pedro, menacingly.

"I have it," responded the Moor, coldly.

Don Pedro, who had advanced a pace, trembled, and stepped back again.

"Oh, you have it!" said he.

"Yes."

"The letter written by Don Frederic?"

"Yes."

"To Blanche de Bourbon?"

"Yes."

"And that letter?"

"I will give to my lord when he is less incensed."

"I," said Don Pedro with a nervous smile, "I incensed? I was never calmer in my life."

"No, my lord, you are not calm. Your eye flashes anger, your lips grow pale, and your hand caresses a poniard. Why do you attempt to conceal it, my lord? It is most natural, and vengeance is legitimate in such a case as this. And that is why, knowing that my lord's vengeance will be terrible, I have endeavored to soften it somewhat."

"Give me that letter, Mothril."

"But, my lord —"

"Give me that letter without delay, — this instant. I wish it."

The Moor drew forth slowly from his red robe the pouch of the unfortunate Fernando.

"My first duty," said he, "is to obey my master, let come of it what will."

The king examined the pouch, drew from it a small bag embroidered with pearls, and eagerly seized the letter which it held. Plainly, the seal of this letter had been tampered with. The features of Don Pedro contracted at the sight, but without commenting upon it he read: —

"Madame, — my queen, — the king orders me to Seville. I have promised you that I would inform you of the important events of my life; this one appears to me to be decisive.

"However that may be, illustrious lady, beloved sister, I should fear but little the vengeance of Doña Padilla, for she it is, without doubt, who has called me thither, did I know that your dear self were safe from her attempts. I care not what may await me, whether imprisonment, or perhaps death. But a prisoner, I should no longer be able to defend you, and if I must die, I would avail myself now of this moment, while my arm is still free, to tell you that it is ever at your service, if it remain unfettered, even as my heart is yours unto death.

"Fernando will bear to you this message, which perhaps is a farewell. Adieu, my gentle queen, my friend; adieu, until we meet again, in this world perchance, — surely in heaven.

"Don Frederic."

"This Fernando, who is he, where is he?" asked the king, grown so pale that his face was terrible to see.

"My lord," responded Mothril, the tone of his voice perfectly natural, "this Fernando was the Grand Master's page. He departed with us. On the evening of the day after our departure he received this message. The same

night, in crossing the Zezera, it so happened that he was drowned, and I found this letter upon his body."

Don Pedro had no need of further explanation in order to understand Mothril.

"Ah!" said he, "you yourself, then, found the body?"

"Yes."

"Before any one else?"

"Yes."

"And no one knows then what this letter contains?"

"Seigneur," said Mothril, "pardon my audacity. Carried beyond the discretion commanded me, but only because of the interests of my king, I opened the pouch; I have read the letter."

"But only you? that is the same as if no one had read it."

"Assuredly, seigneur, I will answer for it since the letter has been in my hands."

"But before?"

"Ah, seigneur, before that I will answer for nothing, especially as the page was not the only one with his master. There was also a cursed giaour, a dog of a—a Christian! pardon, sire."

"And who was this Christian?"

"A French knight he called brother."

"Ah," said Don Pedro, smiling, "I had thought he would have chosen some other title for those who are his friends!"

"Be that as it may. He had no secrets from this Christian, and there would be nothing surprising in the fact if he were also deep in the page's confidence; in that case the guilt will be made public."

"When will the Grand Master arrive?" demanded Pedro.

"He followed me, seigneur."

Don Pedro walked back and forth for some time, his brows frowning ominously, his arms folded, his head bent upon his chest; it was plain to see that a terrible tempest was raging in his heart.

"I must begin with him," he said at last, in a gloomy voice, "and moreover that is the only means I can take which France will excuse; for when King Charles V. sees that I have not spared even my brother, he will no longer doubt their guilt, and he will pardon my not having spared his sister."

"But do you not fear, seigneur," said Mothril, "that the motive of your vengeance may be misunderstood, and it may be thought that in striking at the Grand Master, you destroyed, not the lover of Queen Blanche, but the brother of Henry of Trastamare, your competitor for the throne?"

"I shall publish this letter," said the king; "blood will wash out the stain."

"And meanwhile, what are the king's orders?"

"Let the Grand Master's apartments be prepared."

Mothril departed. Don Pedro remained alone; his thoughts became still darker. He realized what ridicule would attach to his name. Within the king hid a proud and jealous man, who seemed to hear already how the story of the loves of Blanche and the Grand Master would spread among the people, with all the exaggerations which they attach to royal failings. Then he fixed his eyes upon Doña Padilla's apartments; he fancied that he could see her standing at the curtained window, and that he had surprised the smile of gratified pride which her face would wear.

"It is not she who has compelled me to take this step," said he; "and yet that will be said, and she will believe it."

He turned his head impatiently, and his eyes wandered vaguely from place to place.

At this moment, upon a terrace below, two Moorish slaves passed bearing perfuming pans, whence exhaled a bluish, fragrant vapor. A wind from the mountains brought this intoxicating perfume to the king.

Behind the slaves appeared a woman, muffled, her figure supple, tall, her waist slender, her head bowed. She was covered after the Arabian fashion with a sort of veiling that made her quite invisible, save for a single opening through which gleamed the radiance of her eyes. Mothril followed her with respect almost, and when they had reached the door of the chamber where the stranger was to enter, the Moor half prostrated himself at the feet of the young girl.

The perfumes, the sensuousness of the girl's glance, the Moor's respect, all these things contrasted so strongly with the passions that were consuming Don Pedro's heart, that he felt himself for a moment refreshed and regenerated, as if at the mere sight of this apparition he had drunken of youth and pleasure. And he awaited impatiently for evening to come.

And when it was come, he descended from his apartment, trusting himself to the night, and walked the gardens where he alone had the right to enter, and paused before the kiosque inhabited by Mothril. Then lifting aside, cautiously, the thick garlands of ivy and the branches of an immense oleander, which served to conceal the interior of the apartment from indiscreet eyes, better even than tapestries could have done, he could see, reclining upon a large silken cushion embroidered in silver, her figure scarcely concealed by the long transparent robe she wore, her feet bare, but adorned with rings and anklets, in Oriental fashion, — Aïssa. Her face

was calm; her gaze turned inward; she seemed lost in a vague reverie; she smiled, disclosing between her rosy lips her delicate teeth, white and perfect as pearls.

Mothril had counted upon the king's curiosity; when night came, he listened and watched. He heard the careful turning aside of the branches, and in the calm freshness of the night distinguished the king's quick breathing, but in no way did he seem to perceive that his sovereign was there. And as the young girl allowed her coral *comboloio*[1] to slip carelessly through her fingers, he hastened to pick it up, and gave it to her, almost kneeling as he did so.

Aïssa smiled.

"Why so many honors in the last few days?" she asked. "A father owes his child no more than tenderness; respect is the right of a father from his child."

"What Mothril does, it is his duty to do."

"My father, why show me more respect than you tender yourself?"

"Because more is due to you than to myself," he replied; "the day will come when all this shall be made plain to you, and when it has come you may perhaps no longer deign to call me father, Doña Aïssa."

These mysterious words created an indefinable impression both in the young girl's mind and in the king's; but despite Aïssa's earnest entreaties, Mothril would answer no farther, and withdrew.

After him entered Aïssa's women. About the sofa of their mistress they set the air in motion with great fans of ostrich-plumes, and then soft music was heard, though musician and instrument remained invisible; the air vibrated as if with melody and perfume blent in one.

[1] A string of one hundred beads, each designating one of the epithets applied to Allah. — Tr.

Aïssa closed her large eyes, consumed with the hidden fires of her longing.

"What is she thinking about?" wondered the king, as the shadow of a dream flitted across her face.

She was dreaming of the French knight.

Her women approached to close the blinds.

"'T is strange!" said the king, obliged to cease this dangerous contemplation. "I fancied I heard her pronounce some one's name."

The king was not mistaken. She had pronounced the name of Agénor.

But although the blinds were drawn, the king was in no frame of mind to enter his apartments again. The most opposing sentiments pierced his heart in this hour. They combated with each other, excluding all hope of repose and slumber; requiring the freshness of the air and the night, with its calm and silence, he continued to wander about in the gardens, always returning, as if it drew him irresistibly, to the kiosque where the beautiful Moor lay wrapped in profound slumber. Sometimes the king would also glance up toward Doña Padilla's windows, fixing his eyes upon the darkened panes; then believing that the haughty Spaniard slept, he continued his walk, always returning by a roundabout path, shorter or longer, to the kiosque.

The king was mistaken. Maria Padilla was not sleeping. There were no lights in her windows; but her heart, as inflamed as Don Pedro's, consumed itself, leaped within her breast, while she sat motionless at her window, enveloped in a sombre robe, and watched the king, never losing a single movement that he made, and, we might almost say, without allowing a single thought of his to escape her.

And, besides the eyes of Doña Padilla, another pair

of eyes sought to pierce the very heart of the king; the Moor had placed himself as a sentinel, where he could watch the result of his intrigue. When the king approached Aïssa's windows he trembled with joy. When Don Pedro glanced towards Maria Padilla's apartment, as if hesitating whether to ascend to his favorite, the Moor's lips uttered, in an undertone, the threats which his hand, placed instinctively upon his poniard, seemed ready to execute. Beneath the eyes of both these observers, under the spell of those piercing and venomous glances, Don Pedro passed the entire night, believing himself alone and forgotten. At last, overcome with fatigue, an hour before dawn, he stretched himself upon a bench, and slept that restless, feverish sleep which only adds an additional pang to suffering.

"You are not yet as I wish to see you," said Mothril, observing that the king had succumbed beneath the weight of fatigue. "I must rid you of this Doña Padilla whom you do not love as you profess to, whom, however, you are not willing to leave."

And he lowered the curtain which he had raised to gaze out into the garden.

"I will go," said Maria Padilla to herself; "it is the last resort. I must be prompt, decisive, and go before this woman — for doubtless it was a woman he was watching through the lattice — has effaced my influence upon his heart."

And she gave orders to her people. In the morning there was great commotion in the palace.

When the king awoke, and ascended to his apartments, he heard the tramping of mules and horses in the courtyards, and in the corridors the hurried steps of women and pages.

He was inquiring the cause of this commotion, when

a door opened, and Maria Padilla appeared upon the threshold.

"What are those horses waiting for, and what do all those bustling servants want here?" asked the king.

"They await my departure, sire, which I have hastened as much as possible, that I may spare Your Highness the presence of a woman who can no longer contribute anything to your happiness. Besides, my enemy arrives to-day; and as your intention doubtless will be to sacrifice me to him in a burst of fraternal tenderness, I surrender my place to him, for I have a duty to perform to my children, who, since their father forgets them, have a twofold need of their mother."

Maria Padilla was considered the most beautiful woman in Spain. So great was her influence over Don Pedro that contemporary chroniclers were convinced that her beauty alone, perfect as it was, could not have won such potency over him, and preferred to attribute her influence to magic instead of discovering that its cause was the natural charm of the magician herself.

Such was Doña Padilla. Her twenty-five years made her still more beautiful; her wealth lay in the fact of her motherhood; her long black hair fell upon a simple woollen robe, which, according to the fashion of the fourteenth century, brought into stronger relief the outline of shoulders and breast and arms. Again she became for Don Pedro not the embodiment of all his dreams, but of the profoundest love and the gentlest thought he was capable of feeling; she was the good genius of his household, and the flower of his soul, the precious casket in which his happiest memories were locked away. The king gazed at her sadly.

"I am surprised that you have not left me before, Maria; but indeed you have chosen your time well, for

you have taken the moment when my brother Henry is in revolt, when my brother Frederic has betrayed me, and the King of France is probably preparing to make war upon me. In truth, women do not love adversity."

"Are you unhappy?" exclaimed Doña Padilla, stepping towards the king, and extending her hands towards him; "in that case, I will remain. That is enough for me to know; at another time I must have asked you, 'Pedro, if I remain, shall you be happier for that?'"

The king in turn had bent forward so that Maria's beautiful hands rested in his own. The moment was one when the heart, deeply wounded, has need of a little love to heal its wounds. He lifted Maria's hand to his lips.

"You are wrong, Maria," he said. "I love you; but to find a love that can correspond with yours you should have loved some other man than a king."

"Then you do not wish that I should leave you?" asked Maria Padilla, with that adorable smile which had power to make Don Pedro forget the rest of the universe.

"No," said the king; "not if you will consent to share my fortunes in the future, as you have shared them in the past."

Then, where she was standing at the open window, she made one of those queenly gestures which would have caused him who saw it to believe that she had been born at the foot of a throne. The beautiful statue indicated to the swarm of servants ready to depart that they were to return to their apartments.

At this moment Mothril entered. The conference of Don Pedro with his mistress had been prolonged too far, and he was uneasy.

"Well, what now?" demanded Don Pedro, impatiently.

"Sire," answered the Moor, "your brother Don Frederic is coming, and his escort can be seen upon the road leading from Portugal."

At this news an expression of such hate sparkled in the king's eyes that Maria Padilla saw plainly that she had nothing to fear from that source, and after extending her forehead to Don Pedro, who touched it with his pale lips, she re-entered her own apartment with a smile.

VIII.

HOW THE GRAND MASTER ENTERED THE ALCAZAR OF SEVILLE WHERE THE KING DON PEDRO AWAITED HIM.

And the Grand Master was really approaching Seville, as Mothril had just said; he reached the gates towards noon, in the midst of the intensest heat of the day.

The Moorish and Christian cavaliers who formed his escort were completely covered with dust, and the flanks of horses and mules were bathed with sweat. The Grand Master glanced towards the walls of the city, which he had expected to see covered with soldiers and people, the custom upon fête-days; but he beheld only the sentinels who were always to be seen on ordinary occasions.

"Ought not the king to be informed of our coming?" asked one of Don Frederic's officers, ready to go on ahead if the prince commanded.

"Do not be disturbed," said Don Frederic, with a sad smile. "The Moor preceded us, and my brother is informed already. Besides," he added, in a bitter voice, "do you not know that tourneys and fêtes are to grace the occasion of my arrival in Seville?"

The Spaniards looked about them in surprise; for nowhere were there any signs of the tourneys that had been promised or the fêtes that had been commanded. On the contrary, everything was gloomy and sad; they questioned the Moors, but the latter did not reply.

They entered the city; doors and windows were closed, as is the custom of Spain during intense heat. No one was to be seen in the streets; there were no signs of preparation; no other sound was heard than the opening of a door to give exit to some curious one, who delayed his siesta in order to see what body of cavaliers this might be which was entering the city just at the hour when, in Spain, even the Moors themselves, children of the sun though they are, seek the shelter of some grove, or the refreshing coolness of some stream.

The Christian cavaliers marched on ahead; then came the Moorish, twice their number, for many troops had joined the first and formed a rear-guard.

Don Frederic noted all these things; the city he had expected to find astir with people and filled with rejoicing was dismal and silent as the tomb; his heart began to feel terrible misgivings. An officer approached, and, bending toward him, said, in a low tone, —

"Seigneur, have you observed that the gate was closed behind us after we entered?"

The Grand Master answered never a word; they continued to advance, and soon they found the Alcazar. Mothril awaited them at its entrance with some of Don Pedro's officers. His features expressed friendliness.

The band which had been expected with such impatience entered the courts of the Alcazar, whose gates, like those of the city, closed behind them.

Mothril followed the prince with every indication of the profoundest respect.

As the prince alighted, he approached him, and said, —

"You know, my lord, that it is not customary to enter the palace armed. Shall I bear your sword to your apartment?"

Don Frederic's anger, long suppressed, waited only this opportunity to burst forth. "Slave!" he said, "has servility besotted you so far that you no longer recognize your princes, or respect your masters? The Grand Master of St. James of Calatrava has the right to enter any church of Christendom, helmeted and spurred. Since when did he lose the right to enter the palace armed, and to speak with his brother, his sword in its scabbard?"

Mothril listened respectfully, and bowed in humility.

"My Lord has spoken the truth," he answered; "and his very humble servant had forgotten, not that he was a prince, but that he was the Grand Master of the Order of Calatrava. All these privileges are Christian customs; it is not surprising that a poor wretch like myself should be ignorant concerning them, or that he should forget them."

Just then another officer approached Don Frederic.

"Is it true, seigneur," he asked, "that you gave orders for us to leave you?"

"Who said so?" asked the Grand Master.

"A guard at the gate."

"What was your answer?"

"That we receive orders only from our lord, Don Frederic."

The prince hesitated for a moment. He felt vigorous; he knew that he was young and brave; at the worst, his little band was strong enough for a long defence.

"Seigneur," continued the officer, seeing that his master pondered, "say a word, give a single sign, and we will rescue you from this snare into which you have been trapped. There are thirty of us, and we carry poniards and lances and swords."

Don Frederic looked at Mothril, and surprised a

smile upon his lips; he followed the direction of his glance. Upon the terraces which surrounded the court were stationed archers and cross-bowmen, their bows and cross-bows in their hands.

"My brave men would simply be butchered," thought Don Frederic to himself. "No! since it is I alone who am wanted, alone I will enter."

The Grand Master turned to his companions, confident and calm.

"Withdraw, my friends," he said. "I am in the palace of my brother, my king; treason cannot inhabit such a dwelling-place. If I am mistaken, remember that I was warned that I should be betrayed, and refused to believe it."

Don Frederic's soldiers bowed, and went forth one by one. Don Frederic found himself alone with the Moors and the King Don Pedro's guards.

"And now," he said, turning to Mothril, "I wish to see my brother."

"Seigneur, your wish shall be fulfilled," answered the Moor, "for the king awaits you impatiently."

He drew back that the prince might mount the stairway of the Alcazar.

"Where is my brother?" demanded the Grand Master.

"In the apartment adjoining the terrace."

The apartment was close to that which Don Frederic usually occupied. Passing before the door of his own apartment, the Grand Master paused for a moment.

"May I not retire," said he, "and rest for a moment ere I appear before my brother?"

"My lord," said Mothril, "when Your Highness has seen the king, you can then rest well, and as long as pleases you."

Then there was a movement among the Moors, who followed the prince. Frederic turned around.

"The dog," murmured the Moors. For the faithful Allan, instead of following the horse to the stable, had followed his master, as if he in some way divined the danger which threatened him.

"The dog is mine," said Don Frederic.

The Moors stood aside, less through respect than through fear, and the dog joyfully placed his two paws upon his master's breast.

"Yes," said he, "I understand what you would say. Fernando is dead. Agénor is far away; you are the only friend that remains to me."

"My lord," asked Mothril, with an ironic smile, "is it also among the privileges of the Grand Master of St. James to enter the royal apartments followed by a dog?"

The blood surged to Don Frederic's brow, and his face darkened. His hand rested upon his poniard; one prompt, rapid, decisive movement, and he would have vengeance upon this insolent and jesting slave.

"No," he said to himself, "the majesty of a king extends even to those who surround him. I will attempt nothing that might detract from it."

Coldly, in silence, he opened the door of his apartment, and motioned the dog to enter.

The dog obeyed.

"Wait for me, Allan," he said. The dog lay down upon a lion-skin. The Grand Master closed the door. At that moment a voice was heard crying, —

"My brother, — where is my brother?" Don Frederic recognized the king's voice, and advanced towards that part of the apartment whence the voice came.

Don Pedro, coming from the bath, still pale from the

effects of his sleepless night, muttering angrily to himself, gazed severely at the young man who did homage before him.

"I am here, my king and brother!" said he. "You have called me, and I have come. I have hastened to your presence to wish you all prosperity."

"How can that be, Grand Master?" answered Don Pedro; "and should I not be surprised that your words accord so little with your actions? You wished me all sorts of prosperity, you said, and yet you conspire with my enemies."

"My lord, I do not understand you," said Don Frederic, rising, for from the moment of this accusation he was unwilling to kneel a single second. "Can it be that these words are addressed to me?"

"Yes, to yourself, to Don Frederic, Grand Master of St. James."

"Then you call me traitor, sire?"

"Yes, for traitor you are," answered Don Pedro.

The young man grew pale, but restrained himself.

"Why these words, my king?" he asked, infinite tenderness in his voice. "I have never offended you, — never, at least, willingly; on the contrary, in many a combat, especially in the wars against the Moors, who are now your friends, I drew a sword almost too heavy for the mere arm of a youth."

"Yes, the Moors are my friends," exclaimed Don Pedro; "and I do well to choose my friends among the Moors, for in my own family I have found only enemies."

Don Frederic drew himself up still more proudly and boldly than before, as the king's reproaches became more outrageous and unjust.

"If you refer to my brother Henry," said he, "I have

nothing to answer, and that does not concern me. My brother Henry has rebelled against you. He has done wrong, for you are our legitimate head, both in age and by birth; but my brother Henry wishes to be king of Castile. It is said that ambition can cause all things else to be forgotten; but I am not ambitious, and I have claimed nothing. I am Grand Master of St. James. If you know of one worthier of the office than I, I am ready to resign my charge into his hands."

Don Pedro made no reply.

"I have conquered Coimbra from the Moors, and I have shut myself within it. It is my own. No one has a right to my city. Do you want Coimbra, my brother? It is a fine port."

And still Don Pedro did not reply.

"I have a small army," continued Don Frederic. "But it was enrolled at your good pleasure. Do you wish my soldiers to serve against your enemies?"

Don Pedro still kept silence.

"I have only my inheritance from my mother, Doña Eleonora de Guzman, and the treasures which I conquered from the Moors. Do you want my money, my brother?"

"I desire neither your office, nor your city, nor your soldiers, nor your treasure," said Don Pedro, no longer able to control himself at sight of the young man's calm, — "neither one nor the other, but your head."

"My life is yours, with all else, my king. I shall defend it no more than I have defended the rest; but why would you take my head, when the heart is innocent?"

"Innocent," repeated Don Pedro. "Do you know a Frenchwoman named Blanche de Bourbon?"

"I know a Frenchwoman named Blanche de Bourbon, and I respect her as my queen and my sister."

"Indeed! I would have you know that the one you consider your sister and your queen is the enemy of your brother and your king."

"Sire," said the Grand Master, "if you call your enemy one whom you have offended, and whose heart still retains the memory of the injury done to it, why then, the one of whom you speak is your enemy perhaps; but, upon my soul, it were as just to call the gazelle, that flees wounded when pierced by your arrow, your enemy."

"I call any one my enemy who incites my cities to revolt, and this woman incited Toledo. I call that one my enemy who arms my brothers against me, and this woman has armed a brother against me,— not my brother Henry the Ambitious, as you called him a moment ago, but that incestuous hypocrite, my brother, Don Frederic."

"My brother, I swear to you — "

"Do not swear; you would perjure yourself."

"My brother! — "

"Do you know this?" asked Don Pedro, drawing the Grand Master's letter from Fernando's pouch. At sight of this letter, the certain proof that Fernando had been assassinated, Don Frederic, beholding that token of his love in the king's hands, felt that his limbs failed him. He sank on his knee before Don Pedro, his head bent beneath the burden of the misfortunes about to crush him. A murmur of amazement passed through the group of courtiers stationed at the end of the gallery. Frederic, kneeling before his brother, was plainly a supplicant, and, if so, it must be that he was guilty, for it never occurred to them that his supplication might be for another than himself.

"Seigneur," said Don Frederic, "I call God to witness that I am innocent of the crime with which you reproach me."

"Then you must call upon God to hear you; for myself, I do not believe you."

"My death would wipe out the stain, were I guilty," said the Grand Master; "but what when I am guiltless?"

"Guiltless," exclaimed Don Pedro; "what then do you call this?" And carried away by his anger, he struck his brother in the face with the letter written to Blanche de Bourbon.

"Be it so," said Frederic, recoiling; "slay me, but do not outrage me. I have known for a long time that men become cowards when compelled to live with courtlings and slaves. King! you are a poltroon, for you have insulted a prisoner."

"Ho, my guards!" cried Don Pedro; "lead him away and put him to death."

"One moment," interrupted Don Frederic, outstretching his arm towards his brother, his gesture full of majesty; "enraged though you are, you will pause to listen to what I am about to say. You have doubted an innocent woman; you have insulted the King of France in doubting her, but you dare not offend God at pleasure. Now I would pray unto God before you assassinate me. I desire an hour to commune with my supreme Master. *I* am not a Moor."

Don Pedro was almost insane with rage, but he repressed it, for he was observed.

"Very well, you shall have an hour; go!" he said.

Those present at this scene were frozen with fear. The king's eyes flamed, but Don Frederic's flashed lightning.

"Be ready in an hour," cried Don Pedro, as he left the chamber.

"Calm yourself. You will wish I had not died so soon, for I am innocent," answered the young man.

He remained for an hour in retirement; no one approached him; he was face to face with God. When the hour had passed and the headsmen had not appeared, he went out into the gallery and cried, —

"I am waiting, Seigneur Don Pedro; the hour is past."

The headsmen entered.

"What death am I to die?" asked the prince.

One of the executioners drew his sword.

Frederic examined it, passing his finger over the blade.

"Take mine," he said, unsheathing it; "it is sharper."

The soldier took the sword.

"When you are ready, Grand Master," said he.

Frederic motioned the soldiers to wait; going to a table, he wrote a few lines upon a parchment, rolled it, and placed it between his teeth.

"What is that parchment?" asked a soldier.

"It is a talisman that renders me invulnerable," said Don Frederic; "strike now; I do not fear."

And the young man, baring his neck, lifted his long locks above his head, and knelt, his hands folded, a smile upon his lips.

"Do you believe in the power of that talisman?" asked a soldier, in an undertone, of the one who was to strike.

"We shall soon see."

The sword gleamed in the hands of the executioner. One flash of the blade, and the Grand Master's head, severed at a single stroke, fell to the floor.

An awful howl pierced the vaults of the palace.

The king, listening at his door, fled in terror; the headsmen rushed from the chamber. There remained in the place of blood nothing but a head separated from the body, and a dog, who, rushing through the door, crouched beside these woful remains.

IX.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULÉON RECEIVED THE LETTER OF WHICH HE CAME IN QUEST.

DISMAL and dark, the first shadows of evening descended upon the desolate palace. Don Pedro sat, gloomy and restless, in one of the smaller apartments of the palace, where he had retreated, not daring to remain in the one which adjoined the chamber where lay the corpse of his brother. Near him sat Maria Padilla, weeping.

"Why do you weep, madame?" asked the king, suddenly and sharply; "have you not what you long wished for? You asked for the death of your enemy; now you ought to be satisfied; your enemy is no more."

"Sire," said Doña Padilla, "in some burst of foolish anger, in some moment when I yielded to a woman's natural jealousy, I did perhaps wish for this death. May God pardon me if that desire ever really entered my heart! I believe I may truly say that I never demanded this death."

"Ah, how like a woman!" exclaimed Don Pedro; "they are all the same, — ardent in their desires, timid in resolve. They would bring to pass what they dare not perform, and if one is so foolish as to obey their wish, they deny it has ever been theirs."

"Sire, in the name of Heaven!" said Maria, "do not say it was for my sake you sacrificed the Grand Master, for to know this would be my torment in this world, my remorse in the next. No, speak the truth; say that you sacrificed him to your honor. I would not have

you leave me before you have said that it was not on my account you were led to this murder."

"I will say anything you wish, Maria," answered the king coldly, rising and going towards Mothril, who had just entered with the full authority of minister, and the assurance of a favorite.

At first Maria turned away, that she need not see this man for whom the Grand Master's death had only intensified her hate, although that death had served her interests. She stepped towards the embrasure of a window, and, standing there, while the king talked with the Moor, she watched a knight, in complete armor, who, profiting by the disorder which had taken possession of the entire castle after Don Frederic's execution, entered the courtyard, neither guards nor sentinels disturbing themselves to ask him where he was going. This knight was Agénor, who had come in obedience to the appeal Don Frederic had made to him. His eyes sought the purple curtains which Don Frederic had referred to as belonging to his apartment, and then he disappeared at an angle in the wall.

Without knowing who he was, Maria Padilla's glance followed him mechanically until he had disappeared from sight, and then her gaze, returning from the outer view to that within, fell upon the king and Mothril. The king was talking vehemently; his energetic gestures indicated that the orders he was giving were terrible ones. A sudden flash of intelligence, the quick intuition common to women, revealed to Doña Padilla the subject of his concern.

She advanced towards Don Pedro just at the moment when he had motioned Mothril to retire.

"Seigneur," she said, "you will not give such an order as this a second time on the same day?"

"Then you heard?" exclaimed the king, growing pale.

"No, but I conjecture. O sire, sire!" she continued, falling upon her knees before the king, "I have often complained of her; often I have excited you against her. But do not kill her, do not kill her, sire; for, after you have done so, you will say to me as you said concerning Don Frederic, that you killed her because I desired her death."

"Maria," said the king gloomily, "rise; do not implore me, for it is useless. All this has been determined upon already; since it is begun, it must be completed; the death of one involves the death of the other. If I smite Don Frederic only, then it will not be thought that he expiated a crime, but that he was sacrificed to some private revenge."

Doña Maria gazed at the king in terror, as some traveller who pauses frightened on the brink of an abyss.

"Oh, all this will be visited upon me," she said, — "upon me and my children. It will be said that I drove you to this double murder; and yet you know, and God knows," she added, falling at his feet, "that I pray, I beseech you, not to cause the ghost of this woman to haunt me."

"No, for I shall proclaim it all, — their crime and my shame. I shall show Don Frederic's letter to his sister-in-law."

"But," exclaimed Doña Maria, "you will not find anywhere a Spaniard who would raise a hand against his queen."

"And for that reason I have chosen a Moor," responded Don Pedro, calmly. "Of what use are the Moors if they cannot be made to do that which the Spaniards refuse to."

"Oh, I should have gone this morning," exclaimed Doña Padilla. "Why did I remain? But there is still time this evening. Let me leave this palace. My home is open to receive you at any hour, day or night; you can visit me there."

"Do as you please, madame," replied the king, for at that moment his memory suddenly reverted to the image of the beautiful Moor of the kiosque, wrapped in the slumber that had so stirred his senses, and watched by women who fanned her with ostrich-plumes; "do as you please. I am tired of hearing you say so often that you are going, and never seeing you go."

"My God, you are witness," said Maria Padilla, "that I, who never asked for the death of Don Frederic, have pleaded in vain for the life of Queen Blanche."

And before Don Pedro could oppose her, she opened the door quickly, and was preparing to depart. But at this moment a loud noise re-echoed through the palace; men, seized with wild terror, were seen fleeing in every direction; cries could be heard, although no one knew what caused them; madness brooded with mighty wings over the palace.

"Listen," said Maria, "listen."

"What is the matter?" asked Don Pedro, approaching her; "and what does all this mean? Answer, Mothril," he continued, addressing the Moor, who was standing at the other side of the vestibule. The Moor was pale, and his eyes were fixed upon some object which Don Pedro could not see; he remained motionless, one hand upon his poniard, while with the other he wiped away the perspiration that streamed from his face.

"Horrible! horrible!" repeated all. Don Pedro stepped forward, and it was, indeed, an awful sight which met his eye. Upon the flaggings at the head of

the staircase appeared Don Frederic's dog, erect as a lion, bloody and terrible. In his mouth he held his master's head, which he dragged gently over the marble floor by the long locks; before him fled all the servants, even the guards of the palace, uttering the cries which Don Pedro had heard.

Bold and brave, and devoid of feeling though he was, Don Pedro attempted to flee. But his feet, like the Moor's, seemed as if nailed to the floor, and still the dog continued to descend, leaving a large red track behind him.

At last, pausing between Don Pedro and Mothril, as if he had recognized in them the two assassins, he laid the head down, and howled so mournfully, that the king's favorite fainted and fell, and the king shuddered, as if the angel of Death had touched him with his wings; then the dog took up his precious burden again, and disappeared into the court.

Another man had heard the howling of the dog, and shuddered at it. This man was the knight in complete armor, whom Doña Maria had seen entering the Alcazar. Though less superstitious than a Moor, he crossed himself, like a good Christian, when he heard this howling, praying God to preserve him from all encounter with evil.

Then the crowd of terrified servants, jostling each other, falling over each other, in their eagerness to flee, roused him from a stupor not unlike that caused by sudden fright. The worthy knight leaned against a plane-tree, and, his hand upon his poniard, watched that procession of pale shadows pass by. At last he perceived the dog, and the dog saw him.

The dog came directly to him, guided by some subtle instinct which caused him to recognize his master's friend in the knight.

Agénor was seized with horror. That bloody head, the dog, resembling a wolf carrying off its prey, that host of servants fleeing with pallid faces and stifled cries, — all these things seemed part of some horrible nightmare of a sick man consumed by fever.

The dog continued to come nearer, joy mingling now with his mourning, and he placed at Agénor's feet the dust-stained head; then he uttered the most funereal and piercing howls he had yet given forth. They reached the very roof of the palace. Agénor for one moment was motionless with fright; he thought his heart would cease to beat; then, divining in part what had happened, he stooped and lifted the beautiful locks with his hand. He recognized, though they were heavy with the shadows of death, the calm, gentle eyes of his friend.

The mouth was peaceful as in life; it almost seemed that the familiar smile still lingered upon the livid lips. Agénor fell upon his knees, and great silent tears rolled down his cheeks. He was about to bestow upon this head the last sad rites, and not till then did he perceive that, tightly pressed between his teeth, the unfortunate Grand Master held a little roll of parchment. He separated them with his poniard, unrolled the parchment, and read as follows: —

"Friend, our sad forebodings did not deceive us; I am to be put to death by my brother. Warn Queen Blanche; her life also is threatened. Cherish my memory."

"Yes, seigneur," said the knight, "I will execute your last wishes religiously. But how am I to find my way out of this place? I do not know how I entered. My head swims, and my hand trembles so that I cannot place my sword in its scabbard; it falls from my fingers."

Pale, shuddering, almost mad, the knight rose to his feet, reeling onward, dashing against the marble columns, stretching his hands in front of him like some drunken man who fears he will be dashed to pieces. At last he found himself in a magnificent garden, planted with orange-trees, pomegranates, and oleanders; jets of water flashed their silvery cascades in porphyry basins. He ran to one of these basins, and drank eagerly, cooling his face by dipping it in the icy water; then he sought to discover where he was; a feeble light seen through the trees attracted his attention, and guided him. He went towards it; a white figure leaning upon the trefoils of a balcony recognized him, sighed, and murmured his name. Agénor raised his head, and beheld a woman, who stretched out her arms towards him. "Aïssa, Aïssa," he cried; and, leaving the garden, he approached the Moorish girl. She extended her arms towards him with an expression of deep love; but suddenly she recoiled, and asked, anxiously, —

"Good God! Frenchman, are you wounded?"

Agénor's hands were bloody, but, instead of answering her, and giving her an explanation that would have taken some time, he laid one of his hands upon her arm, while the other pointed to the dog, who had followed them. At this terrible apparition the young girl screamed. Mothril, who was approaching, heard this cry; his voice could be heard, asking for lights; the sound of his footsteps and those of his servants were heard, coming nearer.

"Flee!" cried the young girl; "he will kill you, and then I shall die, too, for I love you."

"Aïssa," said the knight, "I love you also; be faithful to me, and you shall see me again."

Then, pressing the young girl to his heart, and im-

printing a kiss upon her lips, he drew his long sword, jumped through the low window, and fled, trampling down branches, and crushing the flowers as he went. He was soon outside the garden, crossed the courtyard, darted through the gate, and found himself without, amazed that not the slightest effort had been made to stop him. In the distance he perceived Musaron, erect in the saddle, and holding in the beautiful black horse that Don Frederic had given the knight.

A harsh, rattling sound was heard behind him. He turned around, and then was explained the cause of the lack of zeal the guards had displayed in not barring his passage; the dog, who was unwilling to abandon the only friend that remained to him, had followed.

Meanwhile the Moor, seized with fright at the cries he had heard, rushed towards Aïssa. He found the young girl quite pale; she was standing beside the window. He attempted to question her, but the girl answered his first questions with a gloomy silence. Then the Moor suspected what had happened.

"Some one has been here? Answer, Aïssa."

"Yes," replied the young girl; "the head of the king's brother."

Mothril looked at her more attentively, and saw the imprint of a bloody hand upon her white robe.

"The Frenchman has seen you," cried Mothril, exasperated.

But this time Aïssa's eyes met his proudly, and she answered him nothing.

X.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULÉON ENTERED THE CASTLE OF MEDINA SIDONIA.

On the morning after this horrible day, as the sun's first rays gleamed upon the summit of the Sierra Aracena, Mothril, wrapped in a large white mantle, took farewell of the King Don Pedro, at the foot of the steps of the Alcazar.

"I can answer for my servant," said the Moor. "He is the man needed for your vengeance, sire, for his arm is swift and sure; and, besides, I shall keep close watch upon him. Meanwhile, let search be made for this Frenchman, the Grand Master's accomplice, and if he can be found, let there be no mercy for him."

"It is well," said Don Pedro; "go quickly, and return."

"My lord," said the Moor, "to make greater haste, I will conduct my daughter on horseback, and not in her litter."

"Can you not leave her here in Seville?" asked the king. "Has she not her home, her women, and her duennas?"

"Seigneur, I cannot leave her behind. Wherever I go, she must follow me; for this is my treasure, and I guard it well."

"Ah, Moor! do you remember the history of Count Julian and the beautiful Florinda?"

"I ought to remember it," answered the Moor; "for it is to that the Moors owe their entrance into Spain,

in consequence of which I have the honor of being the minister of Your Highness."

"But," said the king, "you never told me that you had a daughter so beautiful."

"It is true; my daughter is very beautiful."

"Is that the reason you adore her on your knees?"

Mothril feigned to be deeply disturbed by these words.

"I?" he asked; "who could have told Your Highness?"

"No one told me; I saw for myself. This is not your child."

"Do not fancy that she is either my wife or my mistress."

"But who is she, then?"

"Some day the king shall know; meanwhile I go to execute His Majesty's orders."

And taking leave of Don Pedro, he departed.

And the young girl did form one of Mothril's suite, wrapped in a large white mantle that left nothing visible save her great black eyes with their arched brows; but the Moor lied when he said she would accompany him the entire way. Two leagues from Seville he turned aside from the main road to place the young girl in safety in the palace of a rich countrywoman of his, to whom he intrusted her. Then, spurring on his steed, he shortened the rest of his journey by a speed which was not again interrupted.

Soon he crossed the Guadalquivir, the very place where the King Don Rodrigo had disappeared after the famous battle which lasted seven days; and between Tarifa and Cadiz he saw the castle of Medina Sidonia towering aloft, wrapped in that melancholy which always broods over the dwelling-place of a captive.

There for many a day had dwelt a young, pale, fair-haired girl, with one woman for her only companion. The number of her guards constantly increased, as though she were the most dangerous of prisoners. Their pitiless eyes followed her incessantly, when, with arms hanging at her side, her head bowed, she walked slowly through the gardens, scorched by the sun. They watched her when, reclining before her window with its iron gratings, she questioned space, looking out sorrowfully, sighing for liberty, her eyes following the ceaseless surging of the vast and infinite ocean.

This woman was Blanche de Bourbon, wife of Don Pedro, whom he had spurned after their wedding night. Hour by hour, in tears, she remembered how, one day, she had seen tender hopes for the future gleaming in the blue eyes of Don Frederic, and her whole life consumed itself with regrets that she had sacrificed that vision to the vain phantom of earthly honors.

And when the unfortunate woman watched other young girls pass through the land on their way to gather the grapes of Xeres or Marbella with their attendant swains, who sang snatches of song, her heart swelled, and tears gushed afresh from her eyes; and dreaming how she might have been born far away from the throne, and free as one of these young sunburnt vintagers, she would invoke a beloved image, while she murmured very softly to herself a name that she often recalled.

And from the moment when Blanche de Bourbon was detained there as a prisoner, Medina Sidonia seemed a place accursed. The guards drove away every traveller who would have approached it, suspecting every one of being at least an accomplice if not a friend of the queen. She had but one moment of freedom, rather of solitude; that was the hour when, taking their daily siesta beneath

the burning sun, the sentinels themselves, ashamed of so many precautions for guarding a solitary woman, rested on their lances, and slept beneath the shade of some green plane-tree or some white wall.

Then the queen would descend to a terrace which looked upon the moat, filled with spring water, and if she saw some traveller in the distance she would stretch her arms towards him in supplication, for she hoped that she might convert him into a friend, who would carry news of her to King Charles.

But no one had ever answered this appeal of the captive.

One morning, however, she saw two horsemen coming on the road from Arcos; one of them, in spite of the sun, which was like a ball of fire, and beat down upon his helmet, seemed quite at his ease, though in complete armor. He bore himself so proudly that at the first glance she recognized in him a valorous knight. From the moment she saw him Blanche's gaze was fixed upon his face, and could not leave it. He advanced at a rapid gallop upon a vigorous black horse, and although, apparently, he had come from Seville, and was on his way to Medina Sidonia, although all the messengers she had ever received from Seville had been messengers of sorrow, Queen Blanche experienced a sudden emotion of joy rather than of fear at sight of the knight.

He, perceiving her in turn, halted.

A vague presentiment of hope struggled in the heart of the prisoner. She approached the rampart, made the sign of the cross, and, as was her usual custom, clasped her hands in prayer.

And then the stranger, spurring on his horse, galloped directly towards the terrace.

The queen, with a frightened gesture, pointed out

to him a sentinel who was asleep, leaning against a sycamore.

The knight alighted, motioned his squire to join him, and said something to him in an undertone. The squire conducted the two horses to a spot in the rear of a rock, where they would be hidden from sight, then returned to his master, and both hastened to a great thicket of lentisk-trees and myrtle, which was within hearing distance of the terrace.

The worthy knight, who, like Charlemagne, had never learned to make any other characters with his pen than those which resembled a poniard or a sword in shape, ordered his squire, who was more learned than himself, and always carried a pencil with him, to write with it a few words upon a large pebble.

Then he motioned the queen to stand back a little, while he threw it upon the terrace. His strong arm aimed the pebble edgewise; it cleaved the air, and fell upon the flaggings, a few steps from her feet. The sound of its fall caused the sentinel, who was fast asleep, to open his eyes for a moment; but when he glanced around, there stood the queen just where he always saw her, and in her habitual attitude, motionless and lonely. He closed his eyes, which were dazed and heavy with slumber, and immediately fell asleep again.

She picked up the pebble, and read these words: —

"Are you that unfortunate Queen Blanche, the sister of my king?"

Her reply was sublime in its majesty and sadness. Crossing her arms upon her breast, she bowed assent, and two great tears rolled down her cheeks.

The knight made a respectful obeisance, and addressed

some words to his squire, who had already provided himself with another stone for a second letter.

"Write this," he said to his squire: —

"Madame, can you be upon the terrace this evening at eight o'clock? I have a letter from Don Frederic to give to you."

The squire obeyed.

The second missive arrived as safely as the first. Blanche made a sudden movement, full of joy; but then she reflected for some moments, and answered, "No."

A third stone was thrown.

"Is there any means of reaching you?" asked the knight, obliged to resort partly to pantomime, for his voice might awaken the sentinel, and his arm had not power to send a letter to the opposite side of the moat. The queen pointed to a sycamore-tree, by whose aid he might scale the wall; then she pointed to an entrance in this wall that led to the tower in which she was imprisoned.

The knight bowed; he had understood.

At that moment the soldier awoke, and resumed his watch. The knight remained concealed for some time; then taking advantage of a moment when the attention of the sentinel was directed elsewhere, he glided with his squire to the place of concealment behind the rock, where the horses were waiting.

"Seigneur," said the squire, "this is no light task we are undertaking; why did you not throw the queen the Grand Master's letter at once? For my part, I certainly would have done so."

"Because through the merest chance it might have miscarried on the way, and the queen might not believe me,

were the letter lost. This evening we will seek some means of reaching the terrace without being seen by the sentinel."

Night came. And still Agénor had found no way of gaining entrance to the fortress. It was half-past seven.

Agénor had determined to enter, if possible, without violence, and through some ruse, rather than by force. But, as usual, Musaron's opinion was completely opposed to that of his master.

"Whatever way you manage it, seigneur," he said, "we shall surely be compelled to attack and to kill. Your scruples, it seems to me, are not warranted. Killing is always killing, and murder is as great a sin at eight o'clock in the evening as it is at half-past seven. I maintain that of all the methods you propose, mine is the only acceptable one."

"And what may it be?"

"You shall see. Now, in truth, this sentinel is a devil of a Moor, a miserable miscreant who rolls his white eyes around, as though he were already half-plunged in the flames to which he will be given wholly some day. Now, seigneur, if you will repeat an *In Manus* you may give spiritual baptism to this infidel."

"And what will come of that?" asked Agénor.

"The only result which can concern us in this affair. We shall slay his body, but we shall save his soul."

The knight did not understand completely what means Musaron was going to employ, but he had great confidence in the imaginative faculty of his squire, which he had more than once had occasion to appreciate; and he acceded to his wishes and busied himself in prayer. Meanwhile Musaron, as tranquilly as he might have acted to win a silver cup at some village festival, unstrung his cross-bow, adjusted his vireton, and took

aim at the Moor. A sharp whistling sound was heard; Agénor, whose eyes had not once left the sentinel, saw his turban tremble, as he stretched out his arms. The soldier sank, opening his mouth as if to cry out, but no sound escaped his lips. Choked with blood, supported by the wall against which he was leaning, he remained erect and almost motionless.

Agénor turned towards Musaron, who, a smile still upon his lips, returned to its place his cross-bow, whence had darted the arrow which had pierced the Moor's heart.

"Observe, seigneur," said Musaron, "there are two advantages in what I have just done. In the first place, we have sent an infidel, against his own wish, straight to Paradise; in the second, we have prevented his calling, 'Who goes there?' Now let us proceed; nothing hinders us further; the terrace is deserted and the way is open to us."

They leaped towards the moat, which they swam across. The water glistened upon the knight's armor, making it gleam like the scaly covering of a fish; as for Musaron, always full of precautions and respect for himself, he had divested himself of his clothing, which he carried in a bundle upon his head. Arrived at the foot of the sycamore, he dressed again, while the knight drained the water which ran out through the openings of his cuirass, and, clinging to the branches of the sycamore, he was the first to reach its top, on a level with the ramparts.

"Well," said Mauléon, "what do you see?"

"Nothing less than the door itself; and no one is guarding it. Your lordship can break it open with two blows of your axe."

Mauléon had now reached the same height as his

squire, and, in consequence, was able to assure himself of the truth of this remark. The way was open to them, and the door already mentioned, which was closed in the evening, was the only object that intercepted communication with the captive's apartment upon the terrace.

Agénor did as Musaron had suggested, and, with the point of his axe between the stones, he caused the lock to yield, and then the two bolts.

The door opened. In front of it was a stairway which served as a private entrance to the apartments of the queen, the main entrance to which was in the courtyard below. On the first floor he found a door, at which he knocked thrice without receiving response.

Agénor suspected that the queen apprehended some surprise.

"Fear not, madame," he said; "it is we."

"I heard you," said the queen, on the other side of the door; "but you will not betray me?"

"So far is that from my thoughts, madame," said Agénor, "that I would open this door that I may help you to flee. I have slain your sentinel; we have only to cross the moat, which will take but a few moments, and then you will be free, and find yourself in the open country."

"But have you the key to this door?" asked the queen; "for I am locked in."

Agénor responded by performing the same manœuvre with this door as he had done with the one below. In a few moments the queen's door had been forced open like the first. "My God, I thank thee," said the queen, perceiving her liberators; then she added, in a trembling voice, scarcely intelligible, "But Don Frederic?"

"Alas, madame," said Agénor, slowly, falling upon

one knee, and presenting a parchment to the queen, "Don Frederic — but here is his letter."

By the light of a lamp Blanche read the note.

"But he is lost!" she cried. "This letter is the last farewell of a man about to die."

Agénor did not answer.

"In Heaven's name!" exclaimed the queen, "in the name of your friendship for the Grand Master, tell me, is he alive or dead?"

"In either case, you see that Don Frederic has commanded you to flee."

"But if he is no more," exclaimed the queen, "why flee? If he is dead why should I live?"

"To obey his last wish, madame, and to demand vengeance in your name and his, from your brother, the King of France."

At that moment the lower door of the apartment opened, and Blanche's nurse, who had followed her from France, entered, pale and terrified.

"O madame," she said, "the castle is full of armed men, who are come from Seville, and they announce that an envoy of the king demands to speak with you."

"Come, madame," said Agénor, "there is no time to be lost."

"On the contrary," said the queen, "if they do not find me now, they will pursue us, and they will surely overtake us. It were better that I receive this envoy, and then, when he has been calmed by my presence and our conversation, we will flee."

"But, madame," said the knight, "what if this envoy is charged with sinister orders, what if his intentions are evil?"

"I shall learn whether Don Frederic is dead or alive," repeated the queen.

"Then, madame," said the knight, "if that is your only reason for receiving this man, I will tell you the truth myself: alas, he is dead!"

"If he is dead," said Queen Blanche, "what matters to me now what this man can do to me? Think of your own safety, Knight of Mauléon, — that is all. Tell the envoy that I will follow you," said Blanche, addressing herself to her nurse.

Then, for the knight still wished her to remain, she imposed obedience upon him with a queenly gesture, and left the apartment.

"Seigneur," said Musaron, "if you will be advised by me, we will leave the queen to attend to her affairs, as she wishes to, and we will think how we may best retrace our steps. Something tells me we shall perish miserably in this place; leave till to-morrow the flight of the queen, and then — "

"Silence!" said the knight; "the queen shall be free this very night, or I a dead man."

"Then, seigneur," said the prudent Musaron, "let us at least fasten the doors again, that no one need perceive we have been visiting the terrace; besides, they will find the Moor's body, seigneur."

"Throw it into the water."

"A good idea, but the obstinate thing will not stay there; it will rise to the surface again."

"An hour is life itself, on some occasions," said the knight. "Go!"

"I wish," said Musaron, "that I might go, and also that I might remain with you; but if I do not go, they will find the body of the Moor. If I do go, I fear that some evil will befall you the moment I leave you alone."

"And what need happen to me, with my poniard and my sword?"

"H'm!" said Musaron.

"Go, now; you are losing time."

Musaron took three steps towards the door, and then he paused suddenly.

"Ah, seigneur," he said, "do you hear that voice?"

Yes, he heard it; some words had been pronounced loudly enough to reach their ears, and the knight listened.

"It sounds like Mothril's voice," he exclaimed; "but that is impossible."

"The powers of Hell, magicians, and the Moors find nothing impossible," replied Musaron, moving towards the door with a rapidity that bore witness to his desire to find himself out doors in the open air again.

"If it be Mothril, the greater reason for hastening to the queen," exclaimed the knight; "for if it is Mothril, the queen is lost;" and he made a sudden movement, as if to follow this generous inspiration.

"Seigneur," said Musaron, holding him by the surcoat, "you know I am no coward, yet I am prudent. I do not conceal the fact, but, on the contrary, I am proud of it. Very well! wait a few minutes, and afterwards I will follow you to perdition, if you wish."

"Let us wait," replied the knight; "perhaps you are right."

Meanwhile the voice continued to speak; it grew more sinister by degrees; the queen's voice, which at first had been very low, became more energetic. After this strange dialogue came a short silence, and then a horrible cry.

Agénor could restrain himself no longer, and rushed into the corridor.

XI.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULÉON WAS CHARGED BY BLANCHE DE BOURBON TO GIVE A RING TO THE QUEEN OF FRANCE, HER SISTER.

THIS is what had happened, or rather was happening, to the queen.

Scarcely had Blanche de Bourbon crossed the corridor, and, following her nurse, ascended the steps leading to her chamber, when the heavy tread of soldiers echoed along the great staircase of the tower.

The men paused upon the lower steps, and two men ascended alone. Then one of them paused in the corridor, while the other continued on his way towards the queen's chamber.

There was a knock at the door.

"Who is there?" asked the nurse, trembling from head to foot.

"A soldier who comes in the name of the King Don Pedro, bearing a message to Doña Blanche," answered the voice.

"Open," said the queen.

The nurse did so, and recoiled as she saw a man of tall figure dressed in a soldier's costume. A coat of mail enveloped his entire body, and he was wrapped in a large white mantle whose hood concealed his head; his hands were hidden in the folds of the mantle.

"Retire, good nurse," he said, with a slight guttural accent which distinguished even those Moors who were most accustomed to speak Castilian. "Retire, for I

would speak with your mistress upon matters of the utmost importance."

The nurse's first instinct bade her remain, in spite of the soldier's injunction; but her mistress, whom she questioned with a glance, motioned that she should retire, and she obeyed. But as she passed through the corridor she soon repented of her obedience, for, erect and silent against the wall, she saw a second soldier, who doubtless was holding himself in readiness to execute the orders of the first, who had just entered the presence of the queen. Once the nurse had passed this man, and knew that she was separated from her mistress by these two strange visitors, a barrier impossible to overleap, she knew that the queen was lost.

The latter, calm and majestic as usual, advanced towards the pretended soldier, messenger of the king. He bowed his head as if he feared to be recognized.

"And now we are alone," she said, "speak."

"Madame," answered the stranger, "the king knows that you have corresponded with his enemies, and that, you are aware, is a crime which is treasonable in the first degree."

"And is it only since to-day the king has known this?" questioned the queen, with the same calm and majesty as before. "Then, it seems to me that I have been punished quite long enough for this crime which he has not professed to discover until now."

The soldier raised his head, and replied,—

"The king is not speaking to-day of the enemies of his throne, but the enemies of his honor. The Queen of Castile should be above suspicion; and yet she has given occasion for scandal."

"Perform your errand," said the queen, "and go when you have finished."

The soldier was silent for a moment, as if he hesitated to speak further; then he said,—

"Do you know the history of Don Guttiero?"

"No," said the queen.

"Yet it is quite recent, and occasioned gossip enough."

"I know nothing of recent events," answered the prisoner; "and gossip, however loud it may be, does not penetrate the walls of this castle."

"Then I will relate it to you myself," answered the messenger.

The queen, compelled to listen, remained standing, calm and full of dignity.

"Don Guttiero," said the messenger, "had espoused a woman who was young and beautiful. She was sixteen years of age, just the age of Your Highness when you espoused the King Don Pedro."

The queen appeared to be deaf to this allusion, direct though it was.

"This woman," continued the soldier, "before she became Señora Guttiero, was known as Doña Mencia, under which name, as a girl, she had loved a young señor, who was no other than the king's brother, Count Henry of Trastamare."

The queen trembled.

"One night, returning to his home, Don Guttiero found her much agitated and disturbed; he questioned her. She pretended that she had seen a man concealed in her chamber. Don Guttiero took a taper and searched, but he found nothing save a poniard so rich that it could not possibly belong to a simple gentleman.

"The maker's name was upon the hilt. He sought the latter, and asked of him to whom he had sold this poniard.

"'To the Infanta Don Henry, brother of the King Don Pedro,' was the reply.

"Don Guttiero now knew all that he wished to know. He could not take vengeance upon the Prince Don Henry, for he was an old Castilian, full of respect and veneration for his masters, and no matter how great the offence he had received, he would not have desired to stain his hands with royal blood.

"But Doña Mencia was the daughter of a simple gentleman; he could take vengeance upon her, and he did so."

"And how?" asked the queen, her interest excited by the narration of this history which bore so close a resemblance to her own.

"Oh, by a very simple means," answered the messenger. He found a poor leech named Ludovico, whom he seized at his own door, placed a poniard at his throat, bandaged his eyes, and led him into his house.

"Once within, he removed the bandage. The leech saw a woman bound to a bed; two candles were lighted, one at her head, the other at her feet, as though she were already dead. Her left arm was secured so firmly that all her efforts to free it from the cords that bound it were in vain. The man was speechless. He could not understand what the spectacle meant. 'Bleed this woman,' said Don Guttiero, 'and let her blood flow until she bleeds to death.'

"The leech strove to resist, but even as he did so he felt Don Guttiero's poniard, which penetrated his clothing, and was about to enter his breast; he obeyed. That same night a man, deathly pale and covered with blood, threw himself at the feet of Don Pedro.

"'Sire,' said he, 'to-night I was led, my eyes bandaged, a poniard at my throat, into a certain house, and there I was compelled to bleed a woman and to let her blood flow until she was dead.'

"'And who compelled you to this?' said the king. 'Name the assassin.'

" 'I do not know,' answered Ludovico; 'but, unseen of any one, I dipped my hand in the basin, and as I went forth, I made believe stumble and placed my hand all bloody as it was against the door. Search, sire, and the house upon which you find a bloody hand is the house of the assassin.'

"The King Don Pedro took with him the Alcalde of Seville, and they passed together through the city, till they came to a house where they found that horrible token. They knocked at the gate; Don Guttiero opened, for he had recognized his illustrious visitor.

" 'Don Guttiero,' said the king, 'where is Doña Mencia?'

" 'You shall see her, sire,' answered the Spaniard.

" 'And conducting the king to a chamber where tapers were still burning, where the basin full of warm blood was still steaming, Don Guttiero said,—

" 'Sire, you see her whom you seek.'

" 'And what has this woman done?' queried the king.

" 'Sire, she betrayed me.'

" 'And why did you revenge yourself upon her, and not upon her accomplice?'

" 'Because her accomplice is Don Henry of Trastamare, brother of the King Don Pedro.'

" 'Have you proof of what you say?' asked the king.

" 'Here is his own poniard which he dropped in my wife's chamber. I found it upon entering.'

" 'Good,' said the king. 'Bury Doña Mencia, and then cleanse the portal of your house, upon which there can be seen a bloody hand.'

" 'No, sire,' responded Don Guttiero; 'every man exercising a public office is accustomed to place above his door some sign which represents his profession. I am the physician of mine own honor, and that bloody hand is the sign I have chosen.'

"'So be it,' said the king; 'and let it remain, that it may teach your second wife, should you take another, what should be the veneration and fidelity she owes her husband.'"

"And he did nothing more than that?" asked the queen.

"One thing more," said the messenger. "On his return to his palace, Don Pedro exiled the Infanta Don Henry."

"Well, what has this history of Doña Mencia to do with me," demanded the queen, "and wherein do I resemble her?"

"In this, — that she betrayed, even as you have done, her husband's honor," answered the soldier. "Also in this, that like Don Guttiero whose conduct he approved, and whom he pardoned, the King Don Pedro has already meted his just reward to your accomplice."

"My accomplice! what do you say, soldier?" murmured Blanche, to whom these words recalled Don Frederic's letter and her previous fears.

"I come to tell you that the Grand Master is dead," the soldier responded coldly; "put to death for the crime of betraying the honor of his king, and that, guilty of the same crime as he, you must like him prepare to die."

Blanche was like one benumbed, not because of the announcement that she must die, but because of that other, which told her that her lover was dead.

"Dead!" she said. "Then it is true. He is dead!"

There was something almost superhuman in the note of despair and anguish which rung in the words the young woman had just uttered.

"Yes, madame," answered the Moor, "I have brought with me thirty soldiers to escort the body of the queen from Medina Sidonia to Seville, that, however guilty she has been, she may be accorded all the honors due to her rank."

"Soldier," said the queen, "I have told you before that the King Don Pedro is my judge, and not you; you are merely my executioner."

"You are right, madame," said the soldier, and drew from his pocket a long, flexible silken cord, at whose end he proceeded to make a slip-knot.

The cold cruelty of his act roused the queen's indignation, and she exclaimed, —

"Oh, how could the King Don Pedro find anywhere, in his kingdom, a Spaniard willing to accept so infamous a mission as this?"

"I am not a Spaniard, I am a Moor," said the soldier, removing from his head the white hood that had concealed his face.

"Mothril!" she exclaimed, — "Mothril, the scourge of Spain!"

"A man of noble blood, madame," replied the Moor, smiling; "a man who will not dishonor the head of his queen by touching it."

He stepped towards Blanche, the fatal cord in his hand. That instinct which craves life made the young woman recoil from the assassin, and she drew back as he approached.

"Oh! you will not slay me, in a state of sin, without granting me time even for prayer," she cried.

"Madame," said the ferocious messenger, "you are not in a state of sin, for you said yourself that you are innocent."

"Wretch! do you dare insult your queen before butchering her? Oh, coward! had I only one of my brave Frenchmen here to defend me!"

"Yes," said Mothril, smiling; "but, unfortunately, your brave Frenchmen are on the other side of the Pyrenees, and unless your God can work a miracle — "

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"THE KNIGHT APPEARED UPON THE THRESHOLD."

Drawn by J. Wagrez, etched by Teannin.

AGÉNOR DE MAULÉON, I. 173.

...ng, her lips assumed a bluish color.

Kebir," cried Mothril, in Arabic, "Kebir, to my aid!"

And still interposing the queen's body between himself and the knight, he drew forth one of those terrible scimitars, whose curved inner edge can cut off a head as easily as the scythe mows the ears of corn.

J. WAGSTAFF.

"My God is great," answered Blanche. "Help, sir knight! Help!"

And she sprang towards the door; but before she could reach it, Mothril had thrown the noose, which fell upon her shoulders; then he drew it towards himself; and it was at this moment, as the queen felt that cold coil tighten about her neck, that she uttered that lamentable cry which Mauléon had heard. And it was then that Mauléon, forgetting the counsels of his squire, rushed to the spot from which came the queen's voice.

"Help!" cried the young girl, her voice strangled, while she writhed upon the floor.

"Call, call!" said the Moor, drawing the cord more closely about the unfortunate prisoner, who clung to it with both clinched hands; "call, and we shall see whether aid will come, either from God or from your lover."

Suddenly the sound of spurs echoed through the corridor, and then the knight appeared upon the threshold, before the stupefied Moor.

The queen uttered a groan, but joy was mingled with her agony. Agénor raised his sword, but Mothril's strong arm compelled the queen to rise, and he placed her body as a shield between himself and Agénor.

The groans of the sufferer became merely a dull, stifled rattle. Her limbs were convulsed by the violence of her suffering; her lips assumed a bluish color.

"Kebir," cried Mothril, in Arabic, "Kebir, to my aid!"

And still interposing the queen's body between himself and the knight, he drew forth one of those terrible scimitars, whose curved inner edge can cut off a head as easily as the scythe mows the ears of corn.

"Ah, miscreant!" cried Agénor, "would you slay a daughter of France?"

And he attempted to strike Mothril with his sword, over the head of the queen.

But at that very moment he felt himself seized by the waist and bent backward by Kebir, whose two arms encircled him in an iron grasp.

He turned towards this new antagonist, but it was only so much precious time lost. The queen had fallen upon her knees; she did not utter another cry; her groans and even the rattling sound had ceased. She seemed as if dead.

Kebir's eyes wandered over the knight's body, seeking a place where, by disengaging his arm for a moment, he could bury his poniard, which he held between his teeth.

The events we have just been describing had happened with lightning-like rapidity, but not too quickly for Musaron, who had followed his master, and had now reached the queen's chamber.

The cry he uttered, perceiving what had happened, informed Agénor that an unexpected recruit had come to his assistance.

"The queen first!" cried Agénor, still pinioned by the robust Kebir.

There followed a moment's silence, and then something darted past the knight's ear with a whistling sound; he felt the Moor's grasp relax.

The arrow aimed from Musaron's cross-bow had pierced his throat.

"Quick! the door!" cried Agénor. "Shut off every means of communication. I will kill this brigand myself."

And shaking himself free from the corpse of Kebir,

whose arms still encircled him, as the body fell heavily to the floor, he leaped towards Mothril, and before the latter had time to rise and defend himself, he struck him such a violent blow that the heavy sword cut through the double covering of iron mail that protected his head, and grazed his skull. The Moor's eyes grew dim, his blood oozed down his beard in a thick black stream, and he fell upon Blanche's body, as if, even in the last convulsions, he sought to strangle his victim.

Agénor pushed the Moor aside with his foot, and turning towards the queen, loosened as quickly as possible the cord which had almost cut through her flesh. A deep sigh indicated that the queen still lived; but her entire body seemed to be paralyzed.

"The victory is ours," cried Musaron. "Seigneur, lift the young woman's head, and I will carry her by the feet, and we will off with her!"

As if she had heard these words, and desired to come to the aid of her rescuers, the queen raised herself by a convulsive movement, and life returned to her lips.

"Useless, useless," she said. "I am already more than half in the tomb; but give me a cross, that I may die kissing the symbol of our redemption."

Agénor raised to her lips the hilt of his sword, fashioned in the shape of a cross.

"Alas, alas!" said the young queen; "scarcely descended from Heaven, I must so soon ascend again. I shall return to dwell with other virgins for my companions. God will pardon me, for I have loved so much, and so much suffered."

"Come, come," said the knight, "there is yet time; we will save you."

She seized Agénor's hand.

"No, no," she said, "for me all is ended. You have

done all you could. Flee; leave Spain, return to France, find my sister, and tell to her all you have seen, that she may avenge us. I myself will tell Don Frederic how noble and how faithful was his friend."

And, removing from her finger a ring which she gave to the knight, she added,—

"You will return to her this ring; 't is the one she gave me on the day of my departure, in the name of her husband, King Charles."

And raising herself a second time towards the cross formed by Agénor's sword, she expired as the symbolic iron touched her lips.

"Seigneur," cried Musaron, his ear directed towards the corridor, "they come at full speed; they are many."

"They must not find the body of my queen lying near these butchers," said Agénor; "assist me, Musaron."

And they raised Queen Blanche's body, and put her in her chair of carved wood; there she sat, throned in regal state. They placed her foot upon Mothril's bloody head, as painters and sculptors have pictured and carved the Virgin's foot above the crushed head of the serpent.

"And now, let us go," said Agénor, "if we are not surrounded already."

Two minutes later the two Frenchmen found themselves beneath the open vault of heaven, and, descending again by the sycamore, they saw the body of the sentinel. It had remained in the same position as when they had left it, propped against the wall; it still seemed to be on guard, the eyes vacant and staring, as if death had forgotten to close them.

They were already on the other side of the moat, when the movement of torches and repeated cries informed them that the secret of their exploit had been discovered.

XII.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULÉON SET OUT FOR FRANCE, AND WHAT HAPPENED ON THE WAY.

In returning to France, Agénor followed very nearly the same route that he had taken as he journeyed to Spain. He was alone, and, consequently, no one need fear him; he was poor, consequently no one need envy him; and so he hoped to accomplish the mission which the dying queen had intrusted to his hands. Notwithstanding, he thought it wise to regard with distrust every one he met upon the road.

First of those he suspected were the lepers, who, it was said, poisoned the streams with a mixture of human hair, frogs' feet, and adders' heads; then, closely allied to the lepers, and, in fact, to everything and every one that desired to harm the Christians, were the Jews. Then there was the King of Navarre, enemy of the King of France, consequently an enemy of all Frenchmen; and the *Jacques*, those rude peasants who had for a long time incited the people against the nobility, and had reached such a pass that they were actually raising their flails and pitchforks against armed knights. Then the English, posted treacherously in all the goodly places of this fair kingdom of France, at Bayonne, at Bordeaux, in Dauphiné, Normandy, and Picardy, sometimes even in the outskirts of Paris; and last, and chief of all, he mistrusted the Free Companies, those heterogeneous gatherings in which were summed up all the qualities of all the others, for they furnished a contingent which

defied the traveller and the inhabitant alike, defied propriety, beauty, and wealth. This contingent, ceaselessly on the verge of famine, was composed of Jews, Navarrese, English, *Jacques*, to say nothing of what the other countries of Europe had added to it; for each had presented this vagrant band, which had laid waste to France, with a sample of the sorriest and worst part of its population. There were even Arabs among this motley and happy crew; but through some spirit of contradiction, the Arabs had become Christian, which they were permitted to do, while the Christians had become Arabs.

Except for these inconveniences, of which we have given but a mere suggestion, Agénor's journey was most peaceful.

The traveller of those days was compelled to study, to follow, and to imitate the manœuvres of a thieving sparrow, who dares not pilfer, or take a single step or leap without turning its head towards the four points of the compass, to see whether it has anything to fear from a gun or some snare, from a sling, a dog, a child, rat, or goshawk.

Musaron was this restless and pillaging sparrow. Agénor had intrusted to his care the keeping of the funds, and he did not mean that their purse, which was only too lean already, and far from having a golden lining, should be reduced to nothing.

And so he recognized a leper afar off, scented a Jew at a hundred paces, feared an Englishman in every bush, saluted each Navarrese politely, and exhibited his long knife and his cross-bow to every *Jacques* he met. The Free Companies he feared less than did Mauléon; rather, he did not fear them at all, for he said to his master, "If they make us prisoners, seigneur, what matter? We ourselves can enlist in the Free Companies, offering

ourselves for a ransom; and we will pay for our lost liberty by depriving others of theirs."

"All this would be fair and fine enough," said Agénor, "if I had accomplished my mission; then may happen whatever God pleases. Meanwhile, I only wish it may please Him that no mishap befall us."

And thus, without hindrance of any sort, they crossed Roussillon, Languedoc, Dauphiné, and Lyonnais, and had reached Châlon-sur-Saône. Here their impunity ended; for, being convinced that nothing would happen to them so near their journey's end, they ventured to travel by night, and here they fell into an ambush, the snare so well laid, the numbers so many, that it was useless to resist; the prudent Musaron arrested his master's arm just at the moment when he was about to draw his sword rashly from its scabbard, and both were taken without striking a blow. What they had most feared, or, rather, what the knight had most feared, came to pass. Musaron and he had fallen into the clutches of a captain of a Company, Messire Hugues de Caverley, a man who was English by birth, Jew in instincts, Arab in character, with the tastes of a *Jacques* and the astuteness of a Navarrese. In addition to all the rest, he was almost a leper; he said he had made war in countries so hot that he had become so accustomed to the heat as to be really unable to leave off his armor and his gauntlets. His detractors, however, and, like all men of transcendent merit, he had many, said, quite openly, that he never removed his armor and his gauntlets because he feared that he might communicate to his numerous friends the loathsome disease he had brought with him from Italy.

Musaron and the knight were at once conducted before the chief. He was a roistering blade, who desired to

see and question each new captive for himself; for he frequently declared that in the uncertain times in which he lived, he feared his men might permit some prince in peasant's disguise to escape them, and thus he would lose the opportunity of making his fortune.

He speedily acquainted himself with as much of Mauléon's affairs as the latter was willing to disclose, though, it is needless to say, the queen's mission was not discussed, but merely the question of ransom.

"Pardon me," said Caverley; "I was lying in wait for you, like a spider hanging from a beam. I was expecting somebody or something, and you came. I took you prisoner, but I have not the slightest evil intention towards you. Alas! since King Charles is regent, that is to say, since the end of the war, we have scarcely been able to gain our bread. You are a charming cavalier, and I would courteously permit you to depart, were we living in other times, but in these days of famine, you see, we must pick up even the crumbs."

"And here they are," said Mauléon, showing the bottom of his purse to the leader. "And I swear to you by that inheritance which, I trust, God will grant me in Paradise, that I possess nothing more, neither land, nor money, nor aught else of value. How, then, can I serve you? Let me go."

"Well, my young friend," said Caverley, examining, critically, the vigorous frame and martial air of the knight, "in the first place, you can serve in the front rank of our Company with superb effect. Besides, you have your horse and squire; but it is not on that account only that you are so valuable a prize."

"And what unlucky circumstance has enhanced my value so greatly, may I ask?"

"You are a knight, are you not?"

"Yes, I received that honor at Narbonne, at the hand of one of the first princes of Christendom."

"Then, since that is so, you are a valuable hostage."

"A hostage?"

"Certainly. If King Charles V. should take one of my men, one of my lieutenants, for instance, and wish to hang him on a tree, then I can threaten to hang you. That will restrain him. And if, in spite of that threat, he should really hang my lieutenant, why then I will hang you too. It would certainly vex him to see so excellent a knight hanging to a tree! But pardon me," added Caverley, "I see upon your hand a trifle that I did not observe before, in the shape of a ring. *Peste!* let me see it, knight. I am somewhat interested in things of that sort, especially when the value of the material adds to the worth of the workmanship."

Maulĕon understood by this time with whom he had to deal. Captain Caverley was one of the leaders of the band, and he had become a brigand, because, as he himself said, a soldier had nothing to gain in those times, in following his profession honestly. Agénor drew back his hand, and said, —

"Captain, do you respect anything in this world?"

"Whatever I fear," answered the *condottiere*; "but, to be frank, there is nothing that I fear."

"That is unfortunate," said Agénor, coldly; "for, without mentioning the fact that this ring is worth —"

"Three hundred *livres tournois*, counting merely the value of the gold and not the workmanship."

"Well, captain, this ring, which you yourself value at three hundred *livres tournois*, would bring you a thousand if you were afraid of anything —"

"How so; explain, my young friend! One can learn at every age, and I am always glad to receive information."

"Have you, at least, a word of honor, captain?"

"I believe I did have one once, but it has been given so often that there is none left."

"But, at least, you would trust in the word of honor of one who has not lost his by giving it overmuch?"

"There is only one man in the world whose word I would put any faith in, and you, chevalier, are not that man."

"And who is he?"

"Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin; do you think he would vouch for you?"

"I do not know him; not personally, at least," said Agénor. "But, although he is a stranger to me, if you will allow me to go, for the affair is urgent, I promise you, in the name of Messire Du Guesclin himself, not only a thousand *livres tournois*, but a thousand gold crowns."

"I would rather count the three hundred livres which the ring is worth," said Caverley, smiling, and stretching his hand towards Agénor.

The knight recoiled hastily, and turning towards the window, which looked upon the river, he said, stretching his arm towards the Saône, "This ring belonged to Queen Blanche of Castile, and I am bearing it to the King of France. If you will give me your word that you will let me go, I will trust in it, and I promise you a thousand gold crowns. If you refuse, I will throw the ring into the river, and both ring and ransom you will lose."

"Yes, but you will still be left, and I shall hang you."

"That would be a very slight satisfaction for so keen a calculator as yourself, and as a proof that my death is not worth a thousand crowns to you, you will not say 'no' to my proposition."

"I do not say 'no,' answered Caverley, "because — "

"Because you are afraid to, captain! Say 'no,' and the ring is lost; and you may hang me afterwards as soon as you choose. Come, now, is it 'yes' or 'no'?"

"By my faith," exclaimed Caverley, struck with admiration, "this is what I call a fine fellow! The devil fly away with me if I speak not truly! May our Holy Father, the Pope, excommunicate me if I do not love thee, knight!"

"Very fine, and I am properly grateful; but reply."

"What shall I reply?"

"'Yes' or 'no.'"

"Then I say 'yes.'"

"It is well," said the knight, placing the ring upon his finger again.

"But on one condition," said the captain.

"And what is that?"

Caverley was about to answer, when a loud tumult attracted his attention. It came from the other end of the village, or, rather, from the camp, which was on the bank of the river, surrounded by forests. Several soldiers showed their frightened heads at the door, crying, —

"Captain, captain!"

"Yes, yes," answered the *condottiere*, accustomed to alarms of this sort, "I am coming." Then turning to the knight, he said, "You will remain here, and twelve men will guard you. I hope that I pay you sufficient honor, eh?"

"As you choose," said the knight; "but let them not come near me, for the first step they make I will throw the ring into the Saône."

"Neither go near him, nor leave him," said Caverley to his bandits; and, saluting the knight without raising

his visor even for a moment, he turned towards the part of the camp where the uproar was loudest, at a careless pace, which indicated he was quite accustomed to scenes of the sort.

During all the time he was absent, Mauléon and his squire remained standing at the window; the guards were stationed before a door on the opposite side of the apartment, where they remained motionless.

The tumult continued, gradually growing fainter and fainter, until, at last, it ceased altogether. A half-hour after he had gone out, Caverley returned, bringing with him a new prisoner, who had fallen into the hands of the Company, which was spread all over the country, like a net to catch larks.

The prisoner appeared to be a simple country gentleman, of fine figure and commanding presence. He wore a rusty helmet, and a cuirass that might have been picked up by one of his ancestors, on the battlefield of Roncesvalles. Thus accoutred, the first sentiment he inspired in the beholder was a desire to laugh; yet a certain pride in his bearing, a certain boldness in the expression of his features, which endeavored to assume humility, commanded, if not respect, at least circumspection, on the part of those who might have desired to jest at his expense.

"Have you searched him carefully?" asked Caverley.

"Yes, captain," answered a German lieutenant of his, to whom Caverley owed the lucky selection of the position he occupied, — a choice to which he had been inspired, not because of the superiority of the position, but because of the excellent quality of the vintage which in those days could be gathered on the banks of the Saône.

"When I asked you whether you had searched him," said the captain, "I meant to refer to his men also."

"Set your mind at rest," answered the German lieutenant; "the operation has been rigorously performed."

"And did you find anything upon them?"

"A gold piece and two pieces of silver."

"Bravo!" said Caverley; "this has been a lucky day for us."

Then, turning towards his latest prisoner, he said, —

"Let us converse a little together, my paladin! For though you bear a striking resemblance to the nephew of Emperor Charlemagne, I shall not be sorry to learn from your own lips who you are; therefore speak frankly, without restriction, and without reserve."

The stranger replied, "As you perhaps can tell by my accent, I am only a poor gentleman of Aragon, visiting France."

"And you have chosen well," said Caverley. "France is a beautiful country!"

"Only," observed the lieutenant, "you have not chosen a good time to visit us."

Mauléon could not restrain a smile, for he appreciated, perhaps, as no one else could, the justice of this observation.

But the stranger remained unmoved.

"Let us see," said Caverley, "you have told us of what country you are, and that is half of what we wish to know. Now, tell us your name."

"You would be no wiser if I were to tell you," answered the knight, "and, besides, I have none; I am a bastard."

"But, at any rate, unless you are a Jew, Turk, or Moor, you must have a Christian name," said the captain.

"I am called Henry," answered the knight.

"Very well; now raise your visor a little that we may see the fair face of this lordling of Aragon."

The stranger hesitated, and glanced about him, as if to assure himself that there was no one who might recognize him.

Caverley was annoyed at this delay, and motioned to one of his men, whereupon an adventurer approached the prisoner, and, striking the spring of his helmet with the hilt of his sword, raised the iron visor which concealed the stranger's face.

Mauléon uttered a cry, for the face which he saw was the living portrait of Don Frederic, of whose death there could not be the slightest doubt, for had he not held Don Frederic's head in his own hands? Musaron turned pale with terror, and crossed himself.

"Ah! then, you know each other," said Caverley, looking, alternately, at Mauléon and the knight in the rusty helmet.

At this remark the stranger eyed Mauléon uneasily; but at the first glance he was convinced that the knight had never seen him before, and his features regained their composure.

"Well," said Caverley.

"You are mistaken, so far as I am concerned," said the new-comer. "I am not acquainted with this gentleman."

"And you?"

"Not I."

"Why, then, did you cry out just now?" asked the captain, still incredulous in spite of the double denial of his two prisoners.

"Because I was afraid that your servant, in raising his visor, would split open his head."

Caverley smiled. "We bear a sad reputation," said he. "But come now, tell us frankly, knight, do you know this Spaniard or not?"

"By my word as a knight," answered Agénor, "I have never seen him before to-day."

Yet, in uttering these words, which were merely the truth, Mauléon's heart beat faster because of the strange resemblance.

Caverley's glance darted from one to the other. The stranger's features had regained their former unmoved expression. He seemed like some marble statue.

"Come," said Caverley, impatient to solve the mystery, "you were the first comer, knight of — I forgot to ask of you your name; but perhaps you are also a bastard?"

"Yes," said the knight, "I am."

"Good," said the adventurer; "then perhaps you also are without a name."

"Oh, no," said the knight. "I have a name. I am called Agénor, and as I was born at Mauléon, I am frequently called the Bastard of Mauléon."

Caverley cast a rapid glance towards the stranger, to note whether the name just pronounced by the knight had produced any effect upon him.

Not a muscle of his face moved.

"Well, Bastard of Mauléon," said Caverley, "since you were first come, we will finish with your affair first, and then attend to Seigneur Henry's. Well, then, as we were saying, two thousand crowns for the ring."

"One thousand crowns," Agénor replied.

"Are you sure?"

"I am positive."

"Then perhaps it was so. One thousand crowns for the ring. But you must prove to me that it is really the ring of Blanche de Bourbon."

"Yes," said the knight.

The stranger made a motion of surprise that did not escape Mauléon.

"Queen of Castile," continued Caverley.

"Queen of Castile," Agénor repeated.

The stranger redoubled his attention.

"Sister-in-law of King Charles V.," continued the captain.

"Sister-in-law of King Charles V."

The unknown was all ears.

"The same," continued Caverley, "who is now a prisoner in the castle of Medina Sidonia, by order of King Pedro, her husband."

"The same who has just been strangled at Medina Sidonia, by order of Don Pedro, her husband," said the stranger, coldly, but with emphasis upon every word.

Mauléon looked at him in astonishment.

"Ha, ha!" said Caverley; "the affair is becoming more complicated."

"How did you learn this news?" asked Mauléon. "I thought I should be the first to bear these tidings to France."

"I have already told you," said the stranger, "that I am a Spaniard, and that I am from Aragon. I heard of this catastrophe, which caused great stir in Spain, just as I was departing."

"But if Queen Blanche is dead," asked Caverley, "how are you in possession of her ring?"

"Because just before her death she gave it to me, asking me to bear it to her sister, the Queen of France, and to tell her, at the same time, the manner of her death, and at whose hands she met it."

"Then you were present at her last moments," inquired the stranger abruptly.

"Yes," answered Agénor, "it was I who slew her assassin."

"A Moor?" asked the stranger.

"Mothril himself," said the knight.

"Well done, — but you did not kill him."

"What?"

"You wounded him merely — "

"*Morbleu!*" said Musaron; "if I had only known that! I had still eleven arrows in my quiver!"

"Come, now," said Caverley, "all this may be very interesting for you, but it does not concern me in the least, for I am neither Frenchman nor Spaniard."

"That is true," said Mauléon; "to return, then, to our agreement. You will keep all you found upon me, but will restore liberty to my squire and myself."

"There was nothing said about the squire," said Caverley.

"Because it was an understood thing without words, — you will allow me to keep this ring, and in exchange I am to give you a thousand crowns."

"Very good; but there is one slight condition attached."

"A condition?"

"Which I was about to name at the moment we were interrupted."

"True, I remember," said Agénor; "and the condition?"

"It is this: in addition to the thousand crowns, which are the price of your release, you will serve in my company during the first campaign in which it shall please King Charles to employ us, or that I may undertake on my own account."

Mauléon gave a start of surprise.

"That is my condition," said Caverley; "thus or not

at all. You will enroll in the company, and then you are free, — for the present, — it is understood."

"And if I do not return," said Mauléon.

"Oh, you will return, for you have given your word!"

"Well, so be it. I accept, but with one reservation."

"What is that?"

"Under no pretext are you to compel me to draw my sword against the King of France."

"You are right," said Caverley. "I did not think of that, — I, who own no sovereign but England's, and yet — We will draw up an agreement, and you shall sign it."

"I do not know how to write," said the knight, who was not ashamed to admit that he shared in the general ignorance of nobles of his day; "but my squire will write for you."

"And you can make a cross," said Caverley.

"I will do so."

He took a piece of parchment and a pen, and passed them to Musaron, who wrote at his dictation: —

"I, Agénor, Knight of Mauléon, do promise, as soon as my mission to King Charles is accomplished, that I will return to Messire Hugues de Caverley, wherever he may be, and will serve under him with my squire during the entire length of his first campaign, provided that campaign be not directed against the King of France, or against Monseigneur le Comte de Foix, who is my suzerain lord."

"And the thousand crowns," gently suggested Caverley.

"True," said Agénor; "I had forgotten them."

"Oh, but I had not!"

Agénor continued dictating to Musaron: "and, in

addition, I will deliver to Sir Hugues de Caverley the sum of one thousand crowns, which are due him in exchange for the present liberty he has accorded me."

The squire added the date of the day and year. The knight then seized the pen, almost as he would have seized a sword, and made a bold mark in the shape of a cross.

Caverley took the document, read it with the most scrupulous attention, and, having shaken some sand over the parchment, which was still moist, folded it carefully, and placed it in his sword-belt.

"Now," he said, "that is done. You may go. You are free."

"Listen," said the stranger. "I have no time to lose, and as I am also called to Paris by an affair of importance, I ask for ransom on the same terms as this knight. Will that do? Speak, and speak quickly."

Caverley began to laugh.

"I do not know you," said he.

"Do you know this Messire Agénor de Mauléon any better? It is not more than an hour, I believe, since he fell into your hands."

"For observers like ourselves," said Caverley, "an hour is not always needed to discover the character of other men; and in the hour which this knight has passed with me he has acted in a manner which has made me understand him."

The knight of Aragon smiled mysteriously.

"So, then, you refuse me?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"You will be sorry for that."

"Bah!"

"Listen. You have taken all I possessed, and I have nothing left to offer you at this moment; but keep my

men as hostages, keep my equipages, and let me go with my horse."

"*Parbleu!* how very kind and obliging! Your equipages and your men are mine already."

"Then, at least, let me speak a few words to this young knight, since he is free."

"A few words about your ransom?"

"Certainly; at what do you place it?"

"At the sum which was found upon you and your men, — a gold mark and two silver ones."

"Very well," said the knight.

"Now, then," said Caverley, "say whatever you please to him."

"Listen to me a moment, sir knight," said the gentleman from Aragon.

And both drew aside that they might speak more at their ease.

XIII.

HOW THE KNIGHT OF ARAGON PURCHASED HIS RANSOM FOR TEN THOUSAND GOLD CROWNS.

CAPTAIN CAVERLEY'S attention followed the two strangers very closely whilst they conversed, but the Spaniard drew Agénor to such a distance from the adventurer that it was impossible for the latter to hear a single word.

"Sir knight," said the stranger, "we cannot be heard, but we can be seen. Therefore, I beg of you to lower your visor, that your features may be unintelligible to those about us."

"And you, seigneur," said Agénor, "before you lower yours, let me gaze upon your face for a moment; for, believe me, it gives me a melancholy pleasure that you can scarcely understand."

The stranger smiled sadly.

"Sir knight," he said, "look at me all you will. I shall not lower my visor, for though I am but five or six years older than yourself, I have suffered so much that I have learned to control my countenance. It is an obedient servant, which reveals no more than I desire it should; and if it recalls to you the features of some one you have loved, so much the better. I am the more encouraged to ask you to render me a service."

"Speak," said Agénor.

"You appear to be more in the good graces of this bandit who has just made us prisoners, than I am. He does not think so highly of me, it seems, for he persists in detaining me, while he allows you to continue your journey."

"Yes, seigneur," responded Agénor, observing with surprise that since they began to converse apart the Spaniard spoke the purest French, though with a slight accent.

"Well," continued the other, "however great may be your need of resuming your journey, mine is equally great; and, at whatever price, I must escape out of the hands of this man."

"Seigneur," said Agénor, "if you will swear to me that you are a knight, and will give me your knightly word, I will in turn pledge my honor to Captain Caverley, and obtain your freedom with my own."

"That is exactly what I wished to ask of you," exclaimed the stranger, joyously. "You are as intelligent as you are courteous, sir knight."

Agénor bowed.

"Are you of noble birth?" he inquired.

"Yes, Sir Agénor, and I may add that few noblemen can boast of higher than myself."

"Then," said the knight, "you have another name than that you gave awhile ago?"

"Yes," responded the knight, "but — and this will prove your courtesy to the utmost — you must be satisfied with my word of honor, without knowing my name, for this I cannot disclose to you."

"Not even to the man who is ready to pledge his honor for yours — not even to the man whom you ask to answer for you?" said Agénor, surprised.

"Sir knight," answered the stranger, "I reproach myself for a cautiousness which seems unworthy of us both, but there are grave interests at stake which demand it, and these interests are not mine alone. Obtain my liberty at what price you choose, and by the faith of a nobleman, whatever the price may be, I will pay it, and —

if you will permit me to add a word — I would say that you will never have cause to repent having obliged me upon this occasion."

"Enough, enough, seigneur," said Mauléon; "ask of me a service, but do not try to buy it in advance."

"Sir Agénor," said the stranger, "you will appreciate later that it was my loyalty which led me to speak thus, for had I chosen to deceive you for the moment, I could have given a false name, and as you do not know me, you would have been compelled to content yourself."

"I just had the same thought," said Mauléon. "You shall be free the very instant I am, seigneur, if I am still in Captain Hugues de Caverley's good graces."

Agénor left the stranger, who remained in the same spot, and returned to Caverley, who was impatiently awaiting the result of the conference.

"Well, my dear friend," said the captain, "did you get any farther than I, and have you discovered who this Spaniard is?"

"A rich merchant of Toledo, who repairs to Paris on business of the utmost importance, and professes that his detention will cause the gravest injury to his affairs. He asks me to be his security. Will you accept me as such?"

"Are you willing to be?"

"Yes; having shared for a time his situation, I naturally sympathize with him. Come, captain, deal fairly with him."

Caverley reflected.

"A rich merchant," he repeated, "who has need of his liberty to carry on his business — "

"Sir," whispered Musaron in his master's ear, "were you not a little imprudent just then?"

"I know what I am about," answered Mauléon.

Musaron bowed as one who renders homage to superior wisdom.

"A rich merchant," repeated Caverley. "The devil he is! In that case it will cost him more than if he were a mere nobleman, and our first price of one gold mark and two of silver holds good no longer."

"And that is the reason why I have told you frankly who he is, captain! I do not wish to hinder your obtaining from him a ransom worthy of his position."

"Really, sir knight, you are a fine fellow, and I have told you so before. But how much will he give? Was that mentioned in your long conversation?"

"He told me," said Agénor, "that I might go as high as five hundred crowns, silver or gold."

Caverley did not reply; he was absorbed in calculation.

"Five hundred gold crowns," he repeated. "That would be well enough for a simple merchant; but you said he was rich, remember that."

"I do remember it," answered the knight, "and I made a mistake in telling you that; but as every one must pay the penalty of his mistakes, we will put the ransom at one thousand crowns, and if I am obliged to pay five hundred crowns for my indiscretion, why, I must."

"That is hardly enough for a rich merchant," answered Caverley. "A thousand crowns! why, that is scarcely the worth of a knight's ransom!"

Agénor's eye consulted the stranger whose interests he was defending, and an affirmative glance told him that he might increase the price.

"Then let us double the sum and call it an agreement," said the knight.

"Two thousand gold crowns," replied the *condottiere*, astounded himself at the value the stranger set upon his

person. "Two thousand crowns! But this must be the wealthiest merchant in Toledo! No, faith! I believe this is a stroke of luck, and I will make the most of it. Let him double the sum, and then we will think about it."

Agénor a second time glanced towards his client, who again made him a sign in the affirmative.

"Well, then," said the knight, "if you are so difficult to please, we will go as high as four thousand crowns."

"Four thousand gold crowns!" exclaimed Caverley, stupefied and transported with delight; "why, this is a very Jew! and I am too good a Christian to let a Jew escape for less than — "

"How much?" repeated Agénor.

"For less than" — the captain hesitated at the sum he was about to name, for it seemed exorbitant even to himself — "for less than ten thousand gold crowns. Faith, I have said it now, and must hold by it! And upon my word of honor, it is a mere nothing!"

The stranger made an almost imperceptible sign of assent.

"Your hand upon it," said Agénor, extending his hand to Caverley; "we agree to the sum, and the bargain is concluded."

"Wait a moment, wait a moment!" said Caverley. "I will not accept a knight as security for ten thousand gold crowns! *Rate du Pape!* One would need to be a prince to offer such a guarantee as that; and even then, I do not know whether I would accept it."

"Traitor," cried Mauléon, advancing towards Caverley, and placing his hand upon his sword, "I believe you doubt my word!"

"No, no, my boy," replied Caverley, "you are mistaken; it is not you I doubt, but this other! Do you really believe that, if he had once escaped my clutches, he would

ever pay me ten thousand crowns? No; at the first cross-road, he would turn to the left, and you would never see him again. He would not have been so bountiful of words, rather of gestures (I saw him motioning to you), — he would not have offered so much, had he really any intention of paying."

In spite of the immobility of features which the stranger had boasted was his, Agénor saw the red flush of anger mount to his face; but it was repressed almost immediately, and, with a princely gesture of his hand, he said, —

"Come hither, Sir Agénor; I would speak with you a moment."

"Don't go near him," said Caverley. "He wants to seduce you with more fine words, and leave you with the burden of ten thousand crowns upon your shoulders."

But Mauléon knew instinctively that the knight of Aragon was more than he appeared to be; he approached him, his manner indicating absolute confidence, and a certain respect.

"I thank you, loyal knight," said the Spaniard in a low voice. "You do well to pledge yourself for me; and, upon my word, you have nothing to fear. I could pay this Caverley this very moment if it were my pleasure, for, concealed in my horse's saddle I have diamonds and gold to the value of more than three hundred thousand crowns; but the scoundrel would accept the price of my ransom, and then, having obtained it, he would not set me free. Now listen to what you must do. You must change horses with me; you will depart, and leave me here. Then, at the next town, you will rip open my saddle, and from a leathern bag you will find there take what diamonds are needful to obtain ten thousand crowns; then, with a suitable escort, you will return in search of me."

"But, seigneur!" said Agénor, amazed, "who are you, — *Mon Dieu!* — to have such resources as this at your disposal?"

"I think I have already proved to you what confidence I place in you, when I put in your hands all that I possess; there is no need of telling you who I am!"

"Seigneur, seigneur," exclaimed Mauléon, "indeed I tremble, and you cannot know what doubts assail me. This strange resemblance, these riches, this mystery that enshrouds you — Seigneur, I have interests to defend in France, interests which are sacred; and perhaps these interests may be opposed to yours."

"Answer me," said the stranger, in the tone of a man accustomed to command. "You are going to Paris, are you not?"

"Yes," answered the knight.

"To give to King Charles V. the Queen of Castile's ring?"

"Yes —"

"And to demand vengeance in her name?"

"Yes."

"Against the King Don Pedro?"

"Against the King Don Pedro."

"Then you may set your mind at ease," answered the Spaniard. "Our interests are the same; for Don Pedro has killed my — queen, and I also have sworn to avenge Doña Blanche."

"Is this, indeed, the truth?" asked Agénor.

"Sir knight," said the stranger, in a firm and majestic voice, "look at me well. You thought awhile ago that I resembled some one whom you know. Who is that one whom I resemble? Speak!"

"O my unhappy friend!" exclaimed the knight. "O noble Grand Master! Seigneur, you are so like

His Highness, Don Frederic, that one might easily mistake you for him."

"Yes," said the unknown smiling; "is it not a strange resemblance, — the resemblance a brother might bear?"

"Impossible!" said Agénor, regarding the stranger almost with terror.

"Proceed to the next town, sir knight," said he; "sell the diamonds to a Jew, and say to the chief of the Spanish troop you will find there that Prince Henry of Trastamare is the prisoner of Captain Caverley. Calm yourself. I see you tremble in your armor. Remember that we are watched."

Agénor was indeed trembling with surprise. He saluted the prince with even more respect than was perhaps needed, and then returned to Caverley, who hastened to meet him half-way.

"Well," said the captain, "he had more fine words for you, and gilded promises! My poor boy, you are duped."

"Captain," said Agénor, "this merchant's words are, indeed, gilded, for he has shown me the means of paying your ransom before night falls."

"The ten thousand gold crowns?"

"The ten thousand gold crowns!"

"Nothing is easier," said the stranger advancing. "The knight will continue his journey till he comes to a certain spot whose whereabouts he knows; there I have placed the money. He will return with it to you, — ten bags, with a thousand gold crowns in each bag; you shall see, you shall touch this money, and when you are convinced, and the money is safe in your coffers, then you will let me go. Is that too much to ask, or is it agreed upon?"

"Agreed upon! I' faith, yes! if it can be done," said Caverley, who felt like one in a dream.

Then turning towards his lieutenant, he said, —

"Here is a man who rates himself dearly. We shall see whether he can pay for the high esteem in which he holds himself."

Agénor glanced at the prince.

"Sir Mauléon," said the other, "in remembrance of your kindly offices, and the debt I owe you, you will exchange steed and sword with me, as is the fraternal custom among knights; you may lose, perhaps, by the change, but I will make amends to you later."

Agénor thanked him. Caverley, who had heard, burst into a laugh.

"He is cheating you again," he said to the young man, in a low voice. "I have seen his horse, and it is not worth what yours is. This is neither knight nor merchant nor Jew, but some Arab!"

The prince had seated himself tranquilly at a table, and had motioned to Musaron to draw up a second document, similar to the first; and, when this was done, Agénor, who was security for the prince, affixed a cross to this parchment, as he had done to his own.

Caverley examined it with his accustomed care, and the knight set out for Châlon, which was on the opposite side of the Saône. All happened as the prince had said. In the saddle Agénor found the small leather bag, and in it were the diamonds, some of which he sold for twelve thousand crowns, — for the prince, completely stripped by Caverley, would need to replenish his purse; then, returning towards the camp, he discovered the Spanish captain whom Don Henry had mentioned to him, recognized him as such, narrated to him what had happened to the prince, and, accompanied

by his men and himself, proceeded until they came to a place at a distance of a quarter of a league from the camp; here the Spaniards halted, and Agénor continued upon his way.

The affair was concluded sooner than the knight had hoped.

Caverley counted and recounted his gold crowns, heaving deep sighs of joy; but the idea did occur to him that he might have demanded and obtained double the amount he had just received from a man who was able to pay with such marvellous promptness.

But he was compelled to decide quickly, and as the knight had kept word, he must keep his own. And he allowed the two young men to depart, but not without reminding Agénor that the latter was not yet out of his debt, and owed him not only a thousand crowns, but also his service during an entire campaign.

"I trust you will never return to these bandits," said the prince, when they had regained their liberty.

"Alas," said Agénor, "I must — "

"I will pay whatever is necessary to ransom you."

"But I have given my word," said Agénor; "not even you, my prince, can absolve me from that — "

"S'death!" exclaimed the prince. "I have not given mine, and I will hang this rascal to a tree, as surely as we both live. And then I shall not regret the profit he has derived from my crowns."

At this moment they arrived at the small grove where the Spanish captain and his twenty lances lay concealed, and Henry, overjoyed to have regained his liberty so easily, found himself once more with his friends.

And so the knight and the prince were extricated from the difficulty which had besieged both, and they owed their deliverance to the knight's word. And

Agénor, who had departed from Spain without money and without friends, found himself with a fortune at his disposition, and a prince for his friend.

Whereupon Musaron delivered himself of a thousand dissertations, each more ingenious than the one which had preceded it; but, philosophical though they were, these dissertations were as old as antiquity itself, and need no repetition here.

But they ended with a question of so much importance that we cannot pass it by in silence.

"Seigneur," said he, "I cannot understand why, with twenty lances at your disposal, you journeyed alone, with only a single squire and two or three servants."

"My dear squire," said the prince, smiling, "because the King Don Pedro, my brother, had placed spies and assassins on every highway leading from Spain to France. A brilliant retinue would have betrayed me, and I wished to preserve my incognito. Obscurity at present suits me better than broad daylight; and, moreover, I wish it to be said, some day, that 'Henry left Spain with three servants, and returned with an army. Don Pedro, on the contrary, had a whole army in Spain, and he fled from Spain without a single follower."

"Brothers, brothers!" murmured Agénor.

"My brother killed my brother," answered Henry of Trastamare, "and that brother shall be avenged."

"Seigneur," observed Musaron, taking advantage of a moment when the prince was busied in conversation with his lieutenant, "there is a pretext that Henry of Trastamare would not lose for another ten thousand gold crowns!"

"How strongly he resembles the noble Grand Master! Have you remarked it, Musaron?"

"Seigneur," said Musaron, "Don Frederic was blond,

and his brother is red-haired; the Grand Master's eyes were blue, his brother's are gray; one had a nose like the eagle's bill, the other has the beak of a vulture; the Grand Master was slender, but his brother is lean; fire leaped to Don Frederic's cheeks, Seigneur Henry's has blood; it is not Don Frederic he resembles, but Don Pedro. Two vultures, Messire Agénor, two vultures!"

"True, indeed," thought Mauléon; "and they will rend each other over the body of a dove."

XIV.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULÉON PRESENTED TO KING CHARLES THE RING OF HIS SISTER, QUEEN BLANCHE OF CASTILE.

In the garden of a beautiful hôtel which stood in the Rue Saint-Paul, portions of the structure still unfinished, a man of twenty-five or twenty-six years walked back and forth; he wore a long robe of sombre color, with facings of black velvet, fastened at the waist by a long tasselled cord which fell almost to his feet. Contrary to the custom of that time, this man wore neither a sword nor a poniard, nor any other distinctive mark of the nobility. The only vestige of jewelry about him was a small crown of golden fleurs-de-lys, which encircled a black velvet cap, such as was worn before the hood came in fashion. Upon his features were stamped the marked characteristics of the pure Frankish race; he was fair-haired, his locks trimmed squarely, an indication of high birth; his eyes were blue, and his beard of a chestnut color. His face, though it bore witness to his twenty-six years, wore none of the lines that passion imprints; his serious and reflective countenance marked him as a man of weighty thoughts, who was given to meditation. From time to time he paused, and his head sank upon his breast, and one hand hung listlessly at his side; two large greyhounds walked beside him, licking his hands, pausing when he paused, and moving on again when he resumed his walk. Some distance from this man, leaning against a tree, and holding a hooded falcon on his wrist, stood a young page; his

bearing was free and careless; he sported with the bird, whose golden bells indicated that he was a favorite.

At some distance, in the coverts away from the garden, was heard the joyous song of birds that had taken possession of the flowers and the trees of the new royal domicile; for this man with the thoughtful face was no other than the Regent, Charles V., who ruled the kingdom of France, while his father, King John, held on parole of honor, dwelt a prisoner in England. It was Charles V. who had ordered the erection of this beautiful new hôtel which was to replace the castle of the Louvre and the Palais de la Cité, beneath whose walls the studious monarch, the only one of our kings whom posterity has called the Wise, did not find sufficient solitude and tranquillity to suit his taste. Along the walks were seen the numerous servants of this magnificent house, passing and repassing; and besides the impatient cries of the falcon, the warbling of birds in the distance, the hum of the voices of servants exchanging words as they passed each other, like distant thunder was heard from time to time the roaring of the magnificent lions, brought from Africa at King John's command, and shut up in underground dens.

King Charles passed along one of the walks of the garden, musing as he walked, and retracing his steps when he had gone a certain distance, never losing from his sight the view of the entrance to the hôtel; six outer steps led to a terrace which was near this walk.

From time to time he paused, fixing his eyes upon the entrance as if he expected some one; and although it was apparent that he expected this person most eagerly, his face did not betray the slightest impatience. He resumed his promenade with the same measured pace as before, and the same melancholy serenity.

At last, at the top of the flight of stairs appeared a man clad in black, holding in his hand an ebony writing-case and parchments. He scanned the garden, and went down into it, perceiving the king, who advanced directly towards him.

"Ah, is it you, doctor?" said Charles, still approaching him. "I was expecting you. Have you come from the Louvre?"

"Yes, sire."

"And has any messenger returned from my embassy?"

"No one; but two knights appeared. They have journeyed a long distance, and desired to be presented at once to Your Highness, to whom, they said, they have affairs of the utmost importance to communicate."

"What did you do?"

"I led them in, and they await the king's good pleasure, in a chamber of the hôtel."

"And is there no news from His Holiness, Pope Urban V.?"

"No, sire."

"Nor from Du Guesclin, whom I sent to him?"

"None as yet; but we shall not have to wait long to receive him, for he wrote Your Highness, six days ago, that on the following day he would leave Avignon."

The king looked thoughtful and careworn for a moment; then, as if taking resolve, he said, "Come, doctor, let us read the despatches."

The man to whom the king had given this title opened a portfolio which he carried under his arm, and drew forth several important letters. He opened one at random.

"Well," said the king.

"A message from Normandy," answered the doctor. "The English have burned a city and two villages."

"In spite of the peace," murmured the king; "in spite of the treaty of Bretigny, which cost us so dear."

"What will you do, sire?"

"I will send money," said the king.

"A message from Forez."

"Go on," said the king.

"The Free Companies have descended upon the banks of the Saône. Three cities have been sacked, the harvests destroyed, the vineyards despoiled, the cattle carried off; one hundred women have been sold —"

The king buried his face in his hands.

"But is not Jacques de Bourbon there?" he asked. "He promised to rid me of all these brigands."

"Listen," said the doctor, opening a third despatch. "Here is a letter which contains information concerning him. He encountered the Free Companies at Brignais; he gave battle, but —"

The doctor paused, with some hesitation.

"But," repeated the king, taking the letter from his hand; "what is it? let us see."

"Read for yourself, sire."

"Defeated and slain! a prince of the House of France slain, butchered by these bandits. And our Holy Father sends me no answer. And yet the distance from Avignon is not so great."

"What are your commands, sire?" asked the doctor.

"I have none. What should I command before Du Guesclin returns? And in the midst of all this, has there come no messenger from my brother, the King of Hungary?"

"No, sire," answered the doctor timidly, for he saw

that the burden of misfortunes which had descended upon the shoulders of the unhappy king was an ever-increasing one.

"And Brittany?"

"Still in open war; the odds are in favor of the Comte de Montfort."

Charles V. raised his eyes to heaven, but his gaze was less despairing than thoughtful.

"Great God!" he murmured, "wilt Thou forsake Thy kingdom of France? My father was a good king, though too much given over to war. I have accepted, religiously, the ordeal Thou hast sent me, my God. I have endeavored to spare the lives of Thy creatures, regarding those beneath me, to whom Thou hast sent me, as men that I must account for unto Thee, not as slaves, whose blood might be spilled at my caprice. And yet I have pleased no one by my humanity, not even Thyself. I would interpose an obstacle to this barbarism, which would make the world return to chaos; my intention is good, I am convinced; yet no one aids me, no one comprehends."

And the king's thoughtful head rested upon his hand again.

At this moment a tremendous flourish of trumpets was heard, and cries of acclamation shouted through the streets, reached even the king's distracted ears. The page ceased his sport with the falcon; his glance was turned inquiringly towards the doctor.

"Go and see who it is," said the latter. "Sire," he asked, turning towards the king, "did you hear that flourish?"

"I speak to Heaven of peace and philosophy," said the king, "and it answers me with war and violence."

"Sire," said the page, returning in haste, "'t is

Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin, returning from Avignon; he is entering the city."

"He shall be welcome," said the king, speaking to himself, "though he makes more noise in coming than I could wish."

And he rose quickly, and started to meet the newcomer; but before he had reached the end of the walk, a long column appeared, and broke through the garden gate. It was composed of the people themselves, the guards and knights; they were overcome with joyous excitement. They surrounded a man of medium height, big head, and broad shoulders; he was bow-legged, through having spent so much of his life in the saddle.

This man was Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin. His features were vulgar but pleasing; his eye was full of intelligence; he smiled right and left, thanking the people, the guards, and the knights who heaped benedictions upon him.

At this moment the king appeared at the end of the walk; all made him obeisance, and Du Guesclin ascended the steps quickly to offer homage to the king.

"They prostrate themselves before me," murmured Charles, "but they smile upon Du Guesclin; they respect me, but him they love. For he is the image of that false glory whose sway is so potent over vulgar minds, while I represent to them peace, merely, which for their narrow perception means only shame and submission. These men are of their age, but I am not of mine; and they would rather I sent them all to their graves than that I should impose upon them a changed order of things, which accords neither with their habits nor with their tastes. Yet if God gives me strength I will persevere."

Then fixing his calm, benevolent gaze upon the knight, who knelt before him, —

"You are welcome," he said aloud, offering him his hand with a grace as natural to him as the perfume to a flower.

Du Guesclin touched that august hand with his lips.

"Good king," said the knight rising, "here I am! I have hastened, as you see, and I bring you news."

"Good news?" asked the king.

"Yes, sire, very good. I have raised three thousand lances."

The people uttered cries of delight as they saw this re-enforcement, which came conducted by so brave a general.

"That is well," said the king, not desiring to appear unwilling to share in the general joy which these words of Du Guesclin inspired in the admiring multitude.

But he added, in a lower tone, —

"Alas, we did not need to raise three thousand more recruits, but rather to do away with some six thousand too many we already have. We shall always have soldiers enough when we know how to make use of them."

He took the good knight's arm, who marvelled greatly at the honor bestowed on him, and ascended the steps, passing through that crowd of people, courtiers, guards, knights, and women, who, observing the good understanding that reigned between the king and the general, in whom all placed their hopes, cried, "Noël, Noël," until the welkin rang.

Charles V. saluted all with a smile and a gesture of the hand, and conducted the Breton knight into a great gallery, attached to his apartments, which afterwards became his audience-chamber. The cries of the people

still followed them, and could be heard even after the king had closed the door behind him.

"Sire," said Bertrand, joyously, "with the aid of Heaven and the love of these brave hearts you shall win back all your inheritance; and I am certain that two years of war, well-conducted — "

"But to carry on war, Bertrand, money is needed, — much money, and we have no more."

"Bah, sire, with a small tax upon the fields — "

"But there is nothing left to tax, my friend. The English have ravaged the fields, and our good allies, the Free Companies, have succeeded in eating up what the English had spared."

"Sire, you could levy a tax of a franc per head on every member of the clergy, and you might take a tithe of a tenth of their goods; for many a day now these gentlemen of the church have taken a tithe of ours."

"It was for that very purpose I sent you to our Holy Father, Pope Urban V.," said the king. "Will he authorize the levying of this tithe?"

"Not he," responded Bertrand; "on the contrary, he complained of the poverty of the clergy, and asked for money."

"Then you see, my friend," said the king with a sad smile, "that nothing can be accomplished in that quarter."

"Yes, sire, but he will grant you a great favor."

"Any favor which costs dearly, Bertrand," said Charles V., "is no favor for a king whose coffers are empty."

"Sire, he will accord it gratis."

"Then speak quickly, Bertrand, and tell us what may be this favor."

"Sire, the Free Companies are at this moment the scourge of France, is it not so?"

"Yes, surely; but has the pope discovered a means of disbanding them?"

"No, sire, that is beyond his power; but he has excommunicated them."

"Ah, see how much that will accomplish!" cried the king in despair, while Bertrand, who had announced this news most triumphantly, knew not what to think. "Robbers before, they now will become assassins. These wolves will be converted into tigers. Before there were perhaps some among their number who still feared God, and even these now will do so no longer. We are lost, my poor Bertrand."

The worthy knight understood how profound the king's wisdom was, and how keen his intelligence. He had that quality so valuable in a man of inferior intellect: he felt deference to a judgment superior to his own; and so he began to reflect, and his own good sense proved to him that the king discriminated rightly.

"It is true," he said, "they will only laugh when they learn that our Holy Father the Pope has treated them as if they were Christians, and they will turn upon us and treat us like Mohammedans and Jews."

"You see, my dear Bertrand, what an unfortunate state of affairs this is."

"Indeed," said the knight, "I did not think of it, and believed I should bring you good tidings. Do you wish that I should return to the pope and tell him that he need not press this matter?"

"Thanks, Bertrand," said the king.

"Pardon, sire," said Bertrand. "I confess I am a poor ambassador, good for one business only. I can mount a horse and charge, if you say, 'Mount, Guesclin, and charge!' but in disputes where the pen plays a part, and not the sword, I confess I am a poor politician."

"And yet," said the king, "if you would aid me, my dear Bertrand, all is not yet lost."

"If I would aid you, sire!" exclaimed Du Guesclin. "I know well that I wish to, and my arm, my sword, and my whole body are at your disposal."

"But you cannot understand me," sighed the king.

"Ah, sire," said the knight, "that is very possible; for my head is rather hard, which is very fortunate for myself, for I have received so many blows upon it that if it had not been of that sort, it would be to-day somewhat the worse for the knocks it has received."

"I was wrong to say you cannot understand me, my dear Bertrand; I should have said you do not wish to do so."

"Not wish to do so!" repeated Bertrand, astounded. "And how could I be unwilling to do what my king desires of me?"

"Ah, my dear Du Guesclin, because, generally speaking, we are willing to do only those things which it is in our nature to do, those which are according to our inclinations and habitudes; and what I wish to ask of you will seem at first exceptional and even strange."

"Say what it is, sire."

"Bertrand," said the king, "do you know our history?"

"Not very much of it, sire," answered Du Guesclin. "A little about Brittany, for that is my country."

"But at least you have heard of all those tremendous defeats, which again and again have brought France within an inch of destruction?"

"Yes, I have heard of them, sire. Your Majesty doubtless refers to the battle of Courtray, for instance, where the Comte d'Artois was slain, the battle of Crécy, where King Philippe de Valois fled, and the battle of Poitiers, where King John was made prisoner."

"Well, Bertrand," asked the king, "have you ever reflected and asked what was the reason that these battles were lost?"

"No, sire, I reflect as little as possible; it wearies me."

"Yes, I can understand that; but I have reflected upon this, and I have discovered the cause."

"Really?"

"Yes, and I will tell you what it is."

"I am listening, sire."

"Have you noticed that as soon as the French enter the field, instead of defending themselves behind their pikes or their pickets like the Flemish or the English, instead of waiting for the moment that is most favorable for themselves, they charge pell-mell, each seeking to outstrip the other, not taking the trouble to reconnoitre their ground,—every one of them with but one idea in his head, that of being the first comer, and of hitting harder blows than his neighbor. Hence arises lack of unity; no one obeys a higher will than his own, knows any other law than that of his own caprice; the only voice that is heard is the one that cries 'Onward.' This is why the Flemish and the English, who are a grave and disciplined people, obedient to the command of a single one among them who is their leader, strike at the right moment, and almost invariably defeat us."

"That is true," said Du Guesclin, "that is exactly how it is; but who can prevent Frenchmen from charging upon the enemy when he stands before them?"

"Yet that is what must be done, my good Du Guesclin," said Charles.

"It would be possible," said the knight, "if the king would place himself at our head. Perhaps then we would listen to his voice."

"There you are mistaken, my good Bertrand," said Charles; "all know that I am of a pacific nature, very different from my father John, or my brother Philip, in that respect. If I did not advance to meet the enemy, they would believe that fear restrained me, for the kings of France have always sought the enemy wherever he was to be found; only a man whose courage is a recognized fact, whose reputation is already made, and known to be spotless, — such a man only could perform that miracle. And this man is Bertrand Du Guesclin, if he will."

"I, sire?" exclaimed the knight, his eyes opening wide with amazement.

"Yes, you, and you alone, for every one knows that you love danger; and if you were to avoid it, no one could suspect that you did so through fear."

"Sire, what you were speaking of just now might be very fine for me; but all these gentlemen, all these knights, — who would make them obey?"

"You, Bertrand."

"I, sire?" said the knight, shaking his head. "I am too insignificant a person to give orders to your nobility, more than half of whom are of higher rank than myself."

"Bertrand, if you would aid, and serve, and understand me, with one word I could make you greater than all these men."

"You, sire?"

"Yes, I."

"And how would you do that?"

"I would make you constable."

Bertrand began to smile.

"Your Highness is laughing at me," said he.

"No, Bertrand," said the king; "on the contrary, I am speaking seriously."

"But, sire, a sword with fleurs-de-lys graven upon its blade! It has always glittered in hands that were almost royal."

"And that is precisely the misfortune of nations," said Charles; "for the princes, who have received this sword, have received it as an appendage to their rank, and not as a reward for their services. Possessing this sword by right of birth, and not direct from the hands of their king, they forget the duties which that sword imposes upon them, while Du Guesclin, every time he draws this sword from its scabbard, will think of his king, who gave it him, and of all that was enjoined upon him when he received it."

"Indeed, sire," resumed Du Guesclin, "if I should ever receive such an honor — but no, it is impossible."

"How? impossible?"

"Yes! yes! it could do Your Highness no good, and no one would obey me. *I* am no Grand Seigneur!"

"Only obey me," said Charles, his face assuming a determined expression, "and I will see to it myself that you shall be obeyed by others."

Du Guesclin shook his head doubtfully.

"Listen, Du Guesclin," continued Charles. "Do you believe that we are beaten merely because we are too brave?"

"By my faith!" answered Du Guesclin, "I confess, I had not thought of that before; but now I think of it, I believe that I agree with Your Highness."

"Then, my good Bertrand, all will go well. It is not necessary to fight the English, you must try to drive them away; and, in order to do that, no battles, Du Guesclin, no battles; assaults, encounters, skirmishes, that is all. Our enemies must be destroyed by degrees, one by one, in the woods, from behind trees, or when

they are crossing some stream, or when they have remained too long in some town; all this will take longer, I know, but it is the surer way in the end."

"Eh, *mon Dieu!* Yes, I understand, but — your nobility; it would never make war in that fashion!"

"By the Holy Trinity, it *must* make war in that fashion, and no other, if there are two men who are set upon it, and those two men are King Charles V. and the Constable Du Guesclin."

"But to do that, it would be necessary that the Constable Du Guesclin should have equal power with King Charles V."

"And equal power you shall have, Du Guesclin. I will bestow upon you my right as long as I live, and afterwards."

"Yes, over peasants; but how about the nobles?"

"Over them also."

"Think, sire! there are princes in the army."

"With them as with the nobles, and with all the rest. Du Guesclin, listen to me: I have three brothers, — the dukes d'Anjou, de Bourgogne, and de Berry. Well, they shall be not your lieutenants but your soldiers; they shall render obedience to others of gentle birth; and if one of them is found lacking in that, you shall make him get down on his knees, on the very spot where he is found guilty, summon the headsman, and have him beheaded as a traitor."

Du Guesclin looked at the king in amazement; never before had he heard this king, so gentle and kindly, speak with such decision.

For his glance confirmed all that his lips had uttered.

"Ah, well, sire! if you will place such means as this at my disposal, I will obey Your Highness; I will undertake it."

"Yes, my good Du Guesclin," said the king, placing his hands upon the knight's shoulders. "And what you undertake you will accomplish; and meanwhile I will occupy myself with the finances. I will replenish the coffers of the treasury; I will complete the building of my castle of the Bastille; I will erect the walls of Paris, which, later on, shall be encompassed by another wall. I will found a Library, for it is not sufficient to nourish the bodies of men if their souls must also be fed. We are barbarians, Du Guesclin, who busy ourselves removing the rust that gathers upon our cuirasses, without thinking how we may remove that which our intellects have gathered. These Moors we despise are our masters; they have poets, they have historians, they have legislators; but of all these we have nothing."

"It is true, sire," said Du Guesclin, "but it seems to me that we can do without them."

"Yes, as England does without the sun, because she cannot help herself; yet it does not follow that sunshine and air are the same. But if the good God lets you and me live long enough, Du Guesclin, courage! and we two will give to France all that she needs; and to give her all that she needs we must first give her peace."

"And especially," said Du Guesclin, "we must find some means of ridding her of the Free Companies, and only a miracle can do that."

"God will perform that miracle," said the king. "We are both too good Christians, and our intentions are too good, for Him not to come to our aid."

At that moment the doctor chanced to enter.

"Sire," said he, "Your Highness has forgotten the two knights."

"Ah, it is true," said the king; "but you see, doctor, we were busied, Du Guesclin and I, in making France

the first country of the world. They may enter now."

The two knights were ushered in at once. The king went forward to meet them. Only one of them had raised his visor. The smile with which he received them was none the less benevolent.

"You wished to speak with me, knight, and, moreover, upon a matter of importance?"

"It is true, sire," said the young man.

"Then you are welcome," said Charles.

"Do not be over-hasty in welcoming me, my king, for I am the bearer of sad tidings."

A melancholy smile played upon the king's lips.

"Sad tidings!" he repeated; "it is many a day since I have received any tidings that were not sad! But we are not of those who confound the messenger with the news he brings. Speak, then, knight."

"Alas, sire —"

"From what country do you come?"

"From Spain."

"It is some time since we have heard anything favorable from that quarter; you will not surprise us, whatever you may tell us."

"Sire, the King of Castile has put our queen's sister to death."

Charles made a sudden motion of dismay. The knight continued: —

"He put her to death by the assassin's hand, after dishonoring her with calumny."

"Murdered! murdered! my sister!" said the king, growing pale. "It is impossible!"

The knight, who was kneeling, rose abruptly.

"Sire," he said, with a tremulous voice, "it is scarcely kind of the king to insult a simple gentleman, who has

suffered much that he might render his prince a service. Since you will not believe me, here is the queen's ring; that will convince you, even if I cannot."

Charles V. took the ring, gazed at it for some moments, and then his breast heaved, and his eyes filled with tears.

"Alas! alas!" he said, "it is hers. I recognize it, for it was I who gave it her. Well, Bertrand, did you hear?" he asked, turning towards Du Guesclin.

"Sire," said the good knight, "you should tell this brave young man you regret the hasty words you have spoken to him."

"Yes, yes," said Charles; "but he will pardon me, for I am overcome with sorrow. At first I did not wish to believe, and even now I am still unable to believe it."

At this moment the second knight approached, and, raising the visor of his helmet, said, —

"And will you believe me, sire, who received knighthood at your side, — me, whom you loved so dearly, a child of the French court?"

"My son, my son Henry!" exclaimed Charles, — "Henry of Trastamare. Oh, when my misfortunes are at their height, you return to me. I thank you."

"I come, sire," answered the prince, "to mourn with you the cruel death of the Queen of Castile. I come to place myself under your protection; for if Don Pedro has killed your sister, Doña Blanche, he has also killed my brother, Don Frederic."

Bertrand Du Guesclin reddened with anger, and an exterminating fire burned in his eyes.

"'T is a wicked prince," he exclaimed, "and were I King of France — "

"Yes; what would you do?" asked Charles, turning suddenly towards him.

"Sire," said Henry, still kneeling, "protect me; save me, sire."

"I will endeavor to do so," said Charles V.; "but how happens it that you, a Spaniard, coming from Spain, you who are so deeply interested in this affair, — how comes it that you held back, while this knight came forward; how happens it that he speaks, while you remained silent?"

"Because, sire," answered Henry, "this knight, whom I commend to you as one of the noblest and most loyal knights I know — this knight has rendered me signal service; and it is not hard to understand why I accord to him the honor he merits, by permitting him to be the first to speak with you. He secured my ransom from the captain of a Company into whose hands I had fallen; he has been to me a loyal companion, and no one is better able than he to speak to the King of France, for he it was who saw Queen Blanche expire; he it was who handled my brother's bleeding head."

At these words of Henry's, interrupted by many sighs and tears, the king appeared to be distracted with grief, and Bertrand stamped his foot roughly.

Henry watched attentively, through the gauntlet with which he had covered his eyes, the effect his words had produced. It surpassed his hopes.

"Now this story shall be told unto my people," cried the king, inflamed with anger; "and may God punish me if I do not unchain the demon of war which I have so long kept tied up in his den. I will perish with it, if need be, even if I should fall above the body of my last servant. All France shall be swallowed up, but my sister shall be avenged."

But the more animated Charles V. became, the more thoughtful grew Bertrand.

"Such a king as Don Pedro dishonors the throne of Castile," said Henry.

"Marshal," said Charles V., addressing himself to Bertrand, "your three thousand lances will now be useful to us."

"It was for France I enlisted them, and not to cross the mountains. It will be well to make one war at a time. What Your Highness said just now has caused me to reflect; while we are fighting in Spain, sire, the English will return to France, and unite with the Free Companies."

"Then we will accept defeat at their hands," said the king. "Doubtless God wills it so, and that the destiny of this kingdom should thus come to an end. But it will be known why King Charles allowed his fortunes to perish. The people shall perish, but, at least, they shall die for a cause more just and more important than the possession of a piece of land or some ambassador's quarrel."

"Ah!" said Bertrand, "if you had money, sire —"

"I have," said the king, in a low voice, as if he feared that he might be heard outside the apartment. "But money will not bring my sister or Don Henry's brother to life again."

"'T is true, sire," said Du Guesclin; "but we shall avenge them, and that without plundering France."

"Explain," said Charles.

"Certainly," said Bertrand; "with money we can enroll the captains of the Companies. They are demons to whom it matters little for whom they fight, as long as they fight for money."

"And I myself," said Mauléon, timidly, — "if Your Highness would permit me to speak but a word."

"Hear him, sire," said Henry. "In spite of his youth, he is as wise as he is brave and loyal."

"Speak," said Charles.

"If I understand aright, sire, these Companies are a burden upon your hands."

"They lay waste the kingdom, knight; they ruin my subjects."

"Well, perhaps," said Mauléon, "there may be a means, as Messire Du Guesclin has said, of ridding you of them."

"Oh, speak, speak," said the king.

"Sire, all these bands are gathering at this very moment upon the banks of the Saône; like famished crows, now that they see nothing more to prey upon in this kingdom, ruined by war, they will turn to the first bait that is offered them. When Messire Du Guesclin, that flower of knighthood who is known and respected by them all from the first to the last, goes to them, puts himself at their head, and leads them on to Castile, where they can pillage and burn to their hearts' content, you will see that their faith in this great captain is such that they will raise their standard, and depart, to the last man, upon this new crusade."

"But if I go with them," said Bertrand, "is there not danger that they will keep guard over me and make me pay a ransom? I am only a poor knight of Brittany."

"Yes," said Charles, "but you have kings for friends."

"And I myself," said Mauléon, "offer humbly to introduce to your lordship the most redoubtable of them all, Sir Hugues de Caverley."

"Who are you, then?" asked Bertrand.

"Nobody, messire, or, at least, one of small importance; but I chanced to fall into the hands of these bandits, and I have taught them to respect my word, for it

was upon my word that they released me; and when I leave Your Highness, it will be to carry them a thousand crowns, which I owe them, and of which Prince Henry has generously made me a gift; and I am to serve a year in their Company."

"You among these bandits!" said Du Guesclin.

"Messire," said Mauléon, "I have given my word, and it was only on that condition that they let me out of their hands; besides, when you are their commander, these bandits will be converted into soldiers."

"And you think they will go?" asked the king, animated with hope. "You believe that they will leave France; that they will consent to abandon the kingdom?"

"Sire," said De Mauléon, "I am sure of what I say, and there are twenty-five thousand soldiers for you."

"And I will lead them so far away," said Du Guesclin, "that no one of them all will ever return to France; I 'll swear to that, my good king. They wish for war. Well, as God lives, we will give them war!"

"That was what I desired to say," added Mauléon, "and Messire Bertrand has completed my thought."

"But who, then, are you?" asked the king, gazing at the young man in astonishment.

"Sire," responded Agénor, "I am a simple knight of Bigorre, and as I have already told Your Highness, in the service of one of these Companies."

"Since when?" asked the king.

"Since four days ago, sire."

"And how came you to enter that service?"

"Relate the adventure, knight," said Henry; "you have nothing to lose by it."

And Mauléon related to King Charles V. and to Bertrand Du Guesclin the history of his encounter with Caverley in such a manner that it charmed the king, who was as wise as the marshal was well-versed in all matters appertaining to chivalry.

XV.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULÉON RETURNED TO CAPTAIN HUGUES DE CAVERLEY, AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

CHARLES V. was too wise a prince, he had reflected too often upon the affairs of his kingdom not to recognize from the first all the results which could be derived from the situation if events should come to pass, as Mauléon had undertaken that they should. The English, deprived of the assistance of the Companies, those scourges of the land who helped them win their battles, would be compelled to enlist paid troops to replace these who paid themselves by obtaining their reckoning from that lucrative war upon the kingdom which had ruined it.

If this were to cease, there would result a respite for France, during which new institutions might secure added repose for her, and give the king time to execute those great works which he had commenced for the embellishment of Paris and the improvement of the finances.

As to this war with Spain, Du Guesclin saw no reason why it should bear disastrous results. The French knighthood was superior in power and in tactics to every other. The Castilians must be beaten; moreover, Du Guesclin counted upon making a good bargain with the Companies, knowing that, the dearer they paid for victory in Spain, the more advantageous this victory would be for France, since for every corpse he left upon some Spanish battlefield he would have one plunderer less to bring back with him to the kingdom.

Politics at that time were entirely selfish, or, at least, quite personal. Each prince strengthened himself through his own resources, by persuasion or force, or with money, and in virtue of these weapons he possessed certain rights which he found others ready to enforce.

Thus Charles said to himself: —

"Don Pedro has killed his brother and assassinated my sister; but he will justify himself for doing these things, unless I can contrive matters so as to prove to him that he did wrong."

While Don Henry of Trastamare thought: —

"I am the elder, for I was born in 1333, while my brother, Don Pedro, was born in 1336. Alfonso, my father, was affianced to Leonora de Guzman, my mother, and though not married to him, she was in reality his legitimate wife. Chance alone made a bastard of me in the eyes of the world. And as if I had not already a sufficiently good reason for vengeance, Heaven has sent me others in the shape of private injuries and political crimes to avenge. Don Pedro wished to dishonor my wife, and he is my brother Frederic's assassin, and finally he has slain the sister of the King of France. I have reason enough for desiring to dethrone Don Pedro, especially as, if I succeed, I shall in all probability ascend the throne in his place."

Don Pedro said to himself: —

"The real king and legitimate child, I espoused, in accordance with the treaty that gave me France for an ally, a young princess of the blood-royal, called Blanche de Bourbon. Instead of loving me, as was her duty, she loved my brother, Don Frederic; and as if it were not enough that I was compelled to this political alliance, my wife sided with my brothers Tello and Henry, who were making war against me; this in itself was high

treason. Moreover, she has sullied my name by her conduct with my third brother, Don Frederic, which is a capital crime; therefore I have put her and Don Frederic to death. I had a right to do so."

But when he looked about him to see whether this right of his would be firmly sustained, he saw only his Castilians, and Moors, and Jews, while Don Henry had upon his side Aragon, France, and the pope. This was not an equal division, and therefore Don Pedro, who was one of the most intelligent princes of his epoch, sometimes whispered to himself that, however right he might have been in the beginning, he might easily prove himself in the wrong before he ended with the matter.

Preparations went on rapidly at the French court. Charles lost only so much time as was necessary to place the constable's sword in the hands of Bertrand Du Guesclin, and to make an address to the nobles and princes, in which, after having informed them of the honor he had conferred upon the Breton gentleman, he asked them to obey the new constable as they would obey himself. Then, as he was concerned, above all, in obtaining the assistance of the Free Companies for the campaign, without allowing any rumor of the fact to be noised abroad,— for he feared Don Pedro's money might buy these Companies, not to come to his aid in Spain, but to stay at home, in which case he would be hindered in sending an army elsewhere, — King Charles gave full authority to the constable and to Mauléon, who was to introduce him.

Prince Henry of Trastamare, assured of the support of King Charles, followed them as a simple knight.

The journey was made very quietly. The ambassadors were escorted only by their squires, their servants, and a dozen soldiers.

Soon they perceived upon the Saône the innumerable tents of the Companies, who had deserted the remoter parts of France, which they had devoured, and, by degrees, were approaching the centre, like huntsmen when they drive their game before them. They had raised their standards on these fertile plains, like another horde of barbarians awaiting a new Aétius.

Agénor went in advance, leaving the constable in safety in the stronghold of La Rochepot, which still belonged to King Charles; after having taken this precaution, he proceeded to fall into one of the snares set by the Companies on every side.

The captain of the band into whose hands he fell was almost as well known as Messire Hugues de Caverley himself, and he was called the Green Knight; on this day he chanced to be one of the vanguard. Agénor was brought before him, and as he was not disposed to pay two ransoms, he referred to his acquaintance with Messire Hugues de Caverley, to whose tent he was ushered by the Green Knight himself.

The redoubtable chief of the adventurers uttered a cry of delight when he saw his old prisoner, or rather his future associate.

Before any explanation was made, Agénor told Musaron to advance, and the latter drew forth a leather bag, which was well filled, thanks to the munificence of Prince Henry and King Charles V.; from this he took a thousand crowns, and placed them on the table.

"Ah, here is a stroke of luck, companion," said Messire Hugues de Caverley, when the last pile of money had been placed beside nine others. "I confess, I did not expect to see you so soon again. So, then, you have grown accustomed to the idea of sharing our fortunes, which you were so afraid of doing at first?"

"Yes, captain, for a true soldier lives anywhere, and, wherever he is, lives as he pleases; besides, I thought that a good piece of news can never reach us too soon, and I bring you such extraordinary news as, I am sure, you are the last one to expect."

"Bah!" said Caverley, who began to fear, after this prelude, that Mauléon was setting a trap in order that he might break his word, "bah! an extraordinary piece of news, did you say?"

"Messire captain," answered Mauléon, "the other day I spoke to the King of France concerning you. You know I was sent to him by his dying sister, and I told him of the gracious courtesy you had shown toward me."

"Ha! ha!" said Caverley, flattered; "the King of France knows me, then."

"Certainly, captain; for you have ravaged his kingdom often enough for him to remember you. The cries of roasted monks, the lamentations of outraged women, the complaints of prisoners captured for ransom-money, have made your name resound triumphantly in his ears."

Caverley quivered with delight and pleasure beneath his black armor; there was something sinister in the joy of this iron statue.

"Hah!" he exclaimed, "so the king knows me! So Charles V. knows the name of Captain Hugues de Caverley!"

"Yes, he knows that name, and he will not forget it, I promise you."

"And what did he say to you about me?"

"The king said to me, 'Knight, go and find this good Captain Hugues; rather,' he added —"

The captain hung upon every word the lips of Mauléon uttered.

"'Rather,'" continued the knight, "'I will send him one of my most trusted servants.'"

"One of his most trusted servants."

"Yes."

"But a gentleman, I hope."

"*Parbleu!*"

"Known to me?"

"Oh, very well known."

"The King of France pays me high honor," said Caverley, jeeringly; "but he wants something of me, this good King Charles V., does he not?"

"He wishes to make your fortune, captain!"

"Young man, young man," exclaimed the adventurer, with sudden coolness, "do not jest at my expense, for whoever has played that game with me has paid dearly for it. The King of France very likely wishes to obtain something from me, — my head, perhaps, for I believe he would not be sorry to have it; but, however cleverly he may set about it, I regret to say that he will gain nothing through your intervention."

"Ah, see what comes of constant evil doing," replied Mauléon, gravely, his noble countenance almost inspiring the bandit with respect; "you suspect every one, and even calumniate a king who has deserved to be known as the most honest man in his kingdom. I begin to believe, captain," he added, shaking his head, "that the king ought not to have sent a deputy to you at all; that is an honor which princes confer mutually upon each other, and you talk, at present, like a leader of bandits, and not like a prince."

"Now, now!" said Caverley, somewhat disturbed by this bold speech; "the wise must be cautious, and, frankly, consider now, how should the king love me overmuch, after the cries of those 'roasted monks,' the

lamentations of those outraged women, and the complaints of citizens captured for ransom money, to whom you alluded so eloquently just now?"

"Very well," said Mauléon; "I know now what remains for me to do."

"And what remains for you to do? let us hear," asked Captain Hugues de Caverley.

"I shall send word to the king's ambassador that his mission is ended, as the chief of a band of adventurers distrusts the word of King Charles V."

And Mauléon turned towards the door of the tent to carry his threat into execution.

"Stay! stay!" cried Caverley. "I never uttered one syllable of what you think, and I never thought a syllable of what you are saying. Besides, there is time enough, if you want to send back this ambassador. On the contrary, dear friend, he shall be welcome."

Mauléon shook his head.

"The King of France distrusts you, messire, and he will not permit his chief servant to enter your camp unless you give him sufficient guarantee of safe conduct."

"*Rate du Pape!*" roared Caverley. "You insult me, comrade."

"Not at all, my dear captain," said Mauléon. "It was you yourself who set an example of caution."

"*Mordieu!* does not every one know that the king's envoy is sacred, even to us who do not disturb ourselves by keeping many laws? Is this envoy some special person?"

"Perhaps," said Mauléon.

"Now you rouse my curiosity. I want to see him."

"Then sign a pass inscribed in due form."

"That is easily done."

"Yes, but you are not the only one here, captain. I have come to you particularly, because you are chief of all, and because I have had the advantage of previous dealings with you, and not with the others."

"Then this message is not for me alone?" asked Caverley.

"No; it is for the leaders of all the Companies."

"Oh, then, I am not the only one King Charles desires to enrich?" said Caverley, derisively.

"King Charles is powerful enough to enrich, if he chooses, all the thieves in his kingdom," retorted Mauléon, with a smile whose irony quite eclipsed Caverley's.

This seemed to be the mode of speech best suited to the chief of the adventurers, for this last sally put to flight every vestige of ill-humor.

"Send hither my clerk," said he, "and he shall write a safe-conduct in regular form."

A tall, lean, trembling man advanced; he was a schoolmaster of a neighboring village, and Captain Hugues de Caverley had raised him to the dignity of secretary in the interim.

Under Musaron's inspection, he wrote the most complete and precise safe-conduct that ever a doctor's pen inscribed upon parchment. Then a page of the captain summoned the most illustrious bandits among his comrades, and the captain himself — possibly because he could not write or because, for some reason known to himself, he did not desire to remove his iron gauntlet — affixed to the writing a mark made by the knob of his dagger's hilt, and beneath this the other chiefs placed their monograms, some affixing a cross, others their seal, and still others a flourishing signature; and while executing this manœuvre, the chiefs laughed among themselves, believing themselves superior to all the princes on earth, — these men who

could give safe-conduct to an ambassador of the King of France!

When the parchment had been decorated with all these seals and flourishes, Caverley turned towards Mauléon.

"And the name of this messenger?" he asked.

"That you will learn when he comes," said Agénor; "that is, if he deigns to inform you."

"It is some baron!" exclaimed the Green Knight, — "some baron, perhaps, whose castle we have burned, and whose wife we have carried off, and he is coming to learn whether there is no means of bartering his horse and his gerfalcons for his chaste spouse!"

"Let your armor be of the best," said Mauléon, proudly, "and command your pages, if you have any, to don their richest habits; and when he whom I shall announce enters, keep silence, unless you would have it on your consciences, later, that you committed a grave error, inexcusable in warriors who are the ornaments of their profession!"

And, with these words, Mauléon left the tent, with the assurance of a man fully conscious of the weight of responsibility attaching to his errand. A murmur of surprise and doubt ran through the crowd.

"The man is mad!" murmured some.

"Oh, you do not know him!" said Caverley. "He is not mad, and we may expect something new."

Half the day had elapsed. The camp had reassumed its usual aspect. Some were bathing in the river, others drinking under the trees, some wrestling in the grass. Bands of pillagers were seen returning, heralded by cries of joy and distress, accompanied by the spectacle of dishevelled women and slaughtered men dragged at the tails of their horses. Cattle, struggling against their new masters,

were led bellowing into the tents, slain and dismembered on the spot for the evening meal, while the chiefs came to view the results of the expedition and to choose their share of the booty, not without serious conflicts among the drunken and greedy soldiers.

Later in the day the fresh recruits were drilled (peasants, torn from their huts and compelled to serve against their will, became, after three or four years, like their new comrades, and forsook everything else to become like them men of pillage and blood); a swarm of varlets and scrubs were playing about, or preparing a repast for their masters; barrels with heads staved in, beds that had been stolen, broken furniture, rags and tatters of mattresses, littered the ground; and troops of huge dogs without owners wandered through the various groups in search of food, pilfering the pilferers and terrifying the children they encountered.

Suddenly, at the entrance to this camp which we have just attempted to describe, but of which the sight alone could give any real idea, the mighty flourish of four trumpets was heard heralding the approach of a white banner adorned with numerous fleurs-de-lys.[1] Then a great commotion ensued in the camp. The drums beat, the under-officers hastened to reassemble the laggards and guard the principal posts. Soon, past a long line of curious and astonished faces, came a slow and solemn train. The four trumpeters whose piercing notes had awakened the camp, led; then appeared a herald-at-arms bearing aloft the naked sword of the constable, with its golden hilt, the blade adorned with fleurs-de-lys; and then, preceded at some paces by a dozen men, on, to speak more

[1] Some years later Charles V. himself reduced their number to three, in honor of the Holy Trinity.

exactly, twelve iron statues, came a knight of lofty bearing. His visor was lowered; his powerful steed champed its golden bit, and a long sword, the hilt polished by frequent use, glittered at his side.

Near this knight, but somewhat in the rear, came Maulĕon. He conducted the entire troop to the general tent of the chieftains where the council was assembled.

Amazement and expectation had caused a deep silence to fall upon the whole camp which a few moments before was alive with noisy clamorers.

The knight, who appeared to be the leader of the troop, dismounted, while the royal standard was raised, to the sound of trumpets; then he entered the tent.

The chiefs, who were seated when he entered, did not rise, but glanced at each other with a smile.

"This is the banner of the King of France!" said the knight. His voice was clear and penetrating, and he bowed before the banner as he spoke.

"We know it well," said Messire Hugues de Caverley, rising to answer the stranger; "but we are waiting for the envoy of the King of France to make known his name, that we may bow before him, as he bowed a moment ago before the royal standard of his master."

And the knight, raising the visor of his helmet, responded modestly, "I am Bertrand Du Guesclin, constable of France, deputed by good King Charles to treat with the leaders of the Free Companies, to whom may God grant all happiness and prosperity."

He had not ended when heads were uncovered, swords unsheathed from their scabbards and flourished with delight; on all sides respect or rather enthusiasm broke forth in prolonged shouts, and this electric fire passed rapidly through the camp like a train of powder, and the

whole army began to clash their swords and pikes crying at the door of the tent, "Noël, Noël, joy to the good constable!"

And he, bowing with his customary humility, saluted them amid a thunder of applause.

XVI.

HOW THE CHIEFS OF THE FREE COMPANIES PROMISED MESSIRE BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN TO FOLLOW HIM TO THE END OF THE WORLD IF IT SHOULD BE HIS GOOD PLEASURE TO LEAD THEM THERE.

THE first outburst of enthusiasm subsided, and was followed by an attention so profound that the constable's words, which were pronounced calmly and forcibly, pierced the ranks of the crowd, and were heard clearly and distinctly at the other end of the camp, where the remotest soldier received them eagerly.

"Noble captains," said Bertrand, with that courtesy, almost approaching obsequiousness, that won the hearts of all with whom he had dealings, "the King of France has sent me to you, that, together, we may accomplish the only object, perhaps, that is worthy of noble warriors like yourselves."

This was a very flattering exordium; but the idea lodged deepest in the minds of the "noble captains" was that every one ought to be suspected, and, as a result of their ignorance as to what the constable was driving at, the enthusiasm of his hearers was chilled somewhat. He knew, however, that he must continue, and so, taking advantage of the first sentiment he had inspired, he resumed:—

"All of you have won glory enough; you have nothing left to wish for in that direction; but not one among you all is possessed of so much wealth that he can say, 'I have all I could wish for!' Every one of you must have reached, by this time, the point where you desire

that the rewards of such a profession as yours should equal the honor it confers upon you. Now, worthy captains, just imagine what sort of expedition might be made, were you yourselves to direct it against some rich and powerful prince; what spoils might fall into your hands as a result of legitimate warfare; what trophies as glorious as they would be productive! I am an adventurer like yourselves, a soldier of fortune, even as you are; now, seigneurs, are you not weary, as I myself am, of the oppression which we all have exercised over enemies weaker than ourselves? Instead of children's groans and women's cries, such as I heard just now, would you not prefer to hear the trumpet-blast proclaiming a real combat, and the shouts of an enemy whom we must fight to conquer? And, above all, brave knights of every nation, who, as such, have a national honor to sustain, would it not make you happy, happy beyond the glory and riches I have promised you, to unite your forces in defence of a cause that would glorify humanity?

"For what, after all, is the life we warriors are leading? No prince chosen of God has sanctioned our rapine or our exactions. The blood we have shed cries out for vengeance, while the voice that ascends to Heaven has also, despite ourselves, shaken our souls, hardened though they are by the horrors of war. After leading a life that fancy and caprice have guided, if we should become the soldiers of a great king, and champions of God, with wealth and power at our command, should we not fulfil the destiny of every man who consecrates himself to the stern profession of knighthood?"

This time a prolonged murmur of approbation rang through the captains' ranks, for the voice of the rudest breaker of lances, the hardiest skirmisher of his age, swayed them. All had seen Bertrand in action upon the

field of battle; many had felt the edge of his sword or the weight of his mace, and the views of such a soldier were worth considering.

"Seigneurs," continued Du Guesclin, pleased with the effect produced by the first part of his discourse, "listen to the plan which our good King Charles has confided to me for execution. In Spain the Moors and Saracens are more cruel, more insolent than ever, and in Castile reigns a king far more insolent, more cruel, than Moors or Saracens, — a man who has slain his brother, seigneurs; an armed knight, wearing both chain and golden spurs. This king has assassinated his wife, the sister of our King Charles, — a man of such audacity that he dares defy the knighthood of the whole world; for, if such a crime remains unpunished, there is no longer chivalry in the world."

This second period did not impress the adventurers greatly. There was perhaps some slight irregularity involved in the act of slaying a brother or killing a wife, but neither of these crimes was a matter of sufficient importance that twenty thousand honest men need be disturbed in order that it might be avenged. Du Guesclin perceived that he had weakened his cause; but, no whit discouraged, he resumed: —

"Observe, seigneurs, whether a more glorious or more useful crusade was ever projected. You know Spain; some of you have passed through it; all have heard of it. Spain! the land of silver mines! Spain, with its palaces paved with Moorish treasures, where Moors and Saracens have crowded the treasures pillaged from half the world; where the women are so beautiful that for the sake of one of them King Roderick lost his kingdom. Thither I would conduct you, noble comrades, if you will follow me, for thither I myself am going,

with some of my good friends chosen from the best lances in France, to discover whether Don Pedro's knights are as great cowards as their master; to prove whether the temper of their swords equals that of our battle-axes. 'T is a fair undertaking, worthy captains; will you be of our party?"

The constable ended his discourse with one of those natural gestures that nearly always captivate and carry away a deliberative body. Hugues de Caverley, during this harangue, had become so excited that it seemed as if the very Demon of war were prodding his battle-steed. Passing through the circle, he asked an opinion of each, and soon one after another hastened forward to announce his decision; then he presented himself before Bertrand Du Guesclin, who, leaning upon his long sword, while the eyes of the soldiers never left his face, was talking composedly with Agénor and Henry of Trastamare. The heart of the prince had not ceased to throb violently since the beginning of this scene; for, though he was quite unknown to any one of all this crowd, the result of this address meant for him a throne or obscurity, life or death. In men of this stamp ambition usurps the place which belongs in other men to the heart, and any wound in that region is mortal.

The deliberation was very brief, and then Hugues de Caverley approached the constable, and said, amid profound silence, —

"Honored seigneur, Bertrand Du Guesclin, fair sir, our brother and comrade, you who are the perfect mirror of true knighthood, know that because of your valor and your loyalty we are ready to serve you. You shall be not only our associate, but our chief; not merely our equal, but our captain. At all times and in every encounter we are yours, and we will follow you to the

end of the world. Whether they be Moors, or Saracens, or Spaniards, speak the word, and we will march against them. Only there are among us many English knights who love King Edward III., and his son, the Prince of Wales; well, excepting these, they will fight with all who come their way. Do you agree to that, fair sir? "

The constable bowed to the assembly with every sign of deep gratitude, and added a few words to express his sense of the honor done to him by these warriors; and on this point he spoke the truth, for such homage offered to his superiority was indeed flattering to a man of the fourteenth century, whose whole life had been that of a soldier.

The news of this resolve excited an enthusiasm in the camp which it would be difficult to describe. For the daily life of these adventurers had become wearisome to themselves; they had tired of skirmishes with whole cities united against them, warfare carried on behind hedges and from ravines, famine in the midst of opulence, and desolation treading close upon the heels of triumph.

To live in another country, a new land; to enjoy in exchange for the old a virgin soil, bright skies, new wines, new women; to reconquer the rich spoils of the Spaniards, Moors, and Saracens, — this was a dream worth dreaming, and one quite in keeping with the reality of having for their leader " the perfect mirror of knighthood," as Messire Hugues de Caverley had named the constable.

And Bertrand Du Guesclin was received with wild transports of enthusiasm; he reached the tent, which was prepared for him in the most elevated and conspicuous part of the encampment, beneath an archway formed of the lances which the adventurers crossed above his

head, making their obeisance not to the banner of France, but to him who bore it.

"Seigneur," said Bertrand to Henry of Trastamare, when they had re-entered the tent, and while Hugues de Caverley and the Green Knight were congratulating Agénor upon his return, and especially upon the circumstances attending it, — "seigneur, you ought to be well satisfied, for the hardest task of all is accomplished. We are all pleased. These men you have just seen will descend upon the land of the Moors, Saracens, and Spaniards, like some insect swarm alighting upon a carcass, eager to draw blood. Their sting will make itself felt. And in serving their own interests they will advance ours as well. In seeking to better their own fortunes, they will win you a throne. And, thanks to Andalusian fevers, and ambushes among the mountains; thanks to the aid of the rivers they must cross, whose swift currents will carry away horses and horsemen alike; thanks to the enervating abuse of wine and love, orgies and excesses, I count upon losing one-half of these bandits. As for the other half, they will perish, I hope, under the blows of Saracens, and Moors, and Spaniards, who will hammer them well. And so we shall defeat the enemy in every sense. I will install you upon the throne of Castile, and I shall return to France to the great pleasure of good King Charles, with my warriors, whom I shall save through the sacrifice of these illustrious scoundrels."

"Yes, messire," answered Henry of Trastamare, quite thoughtfully; "but do you not fear some unexpected movement on the part of Don Pedro? He is an able chief, and full of resources."

"I do not look so far ahead, seigneur," answered Du Guesclin; "the more trouble we have, the more glory

we shall win, and the more Green Knights and Caverleys we shall leave upon the good soil of Castile. Only one thing troubles me. How are we going to gain an entry into Spain? For it will be no difficult matter to make war upon King Pedro and his Saracens and Moors; but to fight entire Spain is another affair. Five hundred companies would not suffice for that, and it is somewhat more difficult to support an army in Spain than in France."

"I myself will precede you," answered Henry, "and I will inform the King of Aragon, who is one of my friends. Through love of me and hate of Don Pedro, he will grant you free passage through his dominions, and he will assist you with soldiers and money; we shall at least have some place to fall back upon."

"It is easily seen, seigneur," answered the constable, "that you were nurtured and bred in the household of King Charles, whose wisdom is reflected upon all who surround him. Your counsel is full of prudence. Go, then, — and guard yourself against capture; for, if I mistake not, our only object in this undertaking is the making or unmaking of kings."

"Ah, messire," replied Henry, piqued by the shrewdness of this man, whom he had previously regarded merely as a rude soldier, "if once Don Pedro were dethroned, would you not be glad to replace him by a faithful friend of France?"

"Seigneur, believe me," answered Du Guesclin, "Don Pedro would be a faithful friend of France if France had the slightest desire to befriend Don Pedro. But that is not the point under discussion. This miscreant and assassin, this Christian king, for whom all Christianity must blush, ought to be punished; and to enact the rôle of Divine Justice, you will do as well as any

other. Therefore, seigneur, since all is arranged and understood between us, let us depart at once, for I am anxious to reach Spain with the Companies before Don Pedro has gained time to unloose his purse strings, and, as you said just now, to play us some clever trick of his own."

Henry did not answer. In his heart he felt the deepest humiliation in receiving the protection of a simple gentleman, which he was compelled to accept if he would not see his enterprise defeated. But his ambition, and the crown which shone so brightly in his dreams of the future, consoled him for this passing humiliation.

Thus, while Bertrand escorted the principal leaders of the Companies to France, that they might be presented to King Charles V., — who loaded them with so many honors and such largess that they were ready to die joyfully in his service, — Henry, followed by Agénor, who was followed in turn by his faithful Musaron, returned to Spain by a different route from the one they had taken in coming, fearing that they might encounter those who could cause them no little inconvenience, in spite of the fact that they were provided with passports furnished by Captain Hugues de Caverley and Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin.

They took the road upon their right, by which they would reach Béarn sooner, and thence could cross Aragon; consequently they kept close to the Auvergne Mountains, and, following the course of the Vezère, crossed the Dordogne at Castillon.

Henry, who felt quite confident that he would not be recognized, having assumed the costume and name of an obscure knight, desired to ascertain for himself what might be the disposition of the English towards him,

and, if possible, to win over to his side the Prince of Wales; it did not seem an impossible matter, after the eagerness the captains had displayed in expressing their willingness to follow Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin, — an eagerness which indicated that as yet the Black Prince had not declared himself for either side. To have such an ally as the son of Edward III., the child who had won his spurs at Crécy, the youth who had defeated King John at Poitiers, would not merely double the moral power of his cause, but would also add five or six thousand lances to it in Castile; for the forces of Edward III. were such that he could easily place that number at Henry's disposal, without weakening his garrisons at Guyenne.

This prince was encamped, or rather was holding court, at Bordeaux. As there was peace, or at least truce, between France and England at this time, the two knights found no difficulty in entering the town; and, besides, the English were upon the eve of a great feast-day, and in the general tumult the two strangers were not perceived.

Agénor had at first proposed that Prince Henry of Trastamare should take up quarters like himself, with his protector, Messire Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe, who had a house in the city; but the prince had at first refused this offer, fearing that his companion might not guard his secret with sufficient faithfulness. It was decided that for the sake of greater safety Mauléon should pass through Bordeaux without seeing his former tutor; Mauléon had promised this, although it cost him some pangs to be so near the worthy protector who had been like a father to him, and pass him by without a greeting. But after having made the circuit of the entire town, having knocked at the door of every inn,

and having discovered that it was impossible to find lodgings in any hostelry on account of the presence of so many people in the town, the prince was obliged to revert to the offer Agénor had made; so they took the road leading to Messire Ernauton's dwelling, after a solemn and mutual agreement that the name of the prince should not be pronounced by either of them, but that he should pass for a simple knight, Agénor's friend and brother — in arms.

And chance served both travellers marvellously well. Messire Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe happened to be travelling, at the time, in the country of Mauléon, where he had a castle and lands. Only two or three servants remained behind at Bordeaux, and they received the young man as if he were the old knight's son, and not merely his ward.

A confidential servant, who had known Agénor from his birth, did the honors of the house to the two travellers. In the four years that had elapsed since Agénor had seen the place, it was greatly changed. The immense gardens surrounding the house, offering a retreat where the sun's rays and the eye of man could not penetrate, were now separated from the dwelling by a great wall, and seemed to form part of another estate.

Agénor questioned the old servant upon this subject, and was informed that these gardens, where he had passed the careless days of youth, beneath the shade of sycamores and plane-trees, had been sold by his guardian to the Prince of Wales, who had built upon the grounds a sumptuous house, where he lodged such guests as he could not receive openly in his palace. For courtiers were constantly arriving from every land, and messengers from many a crowned head, to the son of Edward III.,

who, never having sustained defeat, had, throughout the world, the reputation of a conqueror. The prince signified to Agénor his desire that all the details of this explanation might be repeated, for, it will be remembered, he had come to Bordeaux with the intention of seeing the Black Prince, and in the hope of making a friend of him; but, as it was late, and their journey had been fatiguing, the prince ordered his servants to prepare his chamber, whither he retired immediately after he had supped. Agénor followed his example, and retired to his own, which was upon the first floor, looking upon the beautiful gardens, where he promised himself the delight of plucking those fair flowers which the seed of time had sown, as he recalled, one by one, the bright memories of his youth.

Instead of seeking his couch, as the prince had done, he seated himself near the window, and, with all the poetic fervor of his twenty years, his eyes were riveted upon those noble trees through whose foliage only a few rays of the moon's light stole furtively. He began to recall the dreams he had dreamed, as he had sailed down the widening stream of life, whose banks had been bright with flowers in the days of his childhood. The sky was cloudless, the night fresh and still; the river sparkled in the distance, showing silvery scales like those of an immense serpent; but, perhaps through some freak of the imagination, perhaps because of some resemblance in the landscape, or because it was the self-same hour of night, or because the perfumes of the orange groves of Guyenne recalled those of Portugal and Andalusia, his thoughts crossed the mountains upon fiery wings, and rested at the foot of the Sierra Estrella, by the bank of that stream which falls into the Tagus, on the further bank of which, drawn by the sounds of the guzla, he

had spoken, for the first time, of love to the beautiful Moorish maiden.

Suddenly, in the midst of the intoxication of the night, a light appeared from the mysterious palace, and shed its rays like a star through the foliage; and then — oh, strange miracle! which the knight believed to be some delusion of his senses — he thought he heard the sounds of a guzla. He listened, trembling with amazement, to the first chords, which were merely a prelude, and then he heard a pure, melodious voice, which, once heard, could never be forgotten; and it sang, in Castilian, this old Spanish romance: —

"Proud of mien, of ancient race,
A fair knight of Aragon
All day long pursued the chase,
Lost of hawk and hounds the trace,
Still he urged his courser on.

"'Neath a spreading oak-tree's shade
Sank the knight at close of day;
To his ears strange murmurs strayed;
Soft, then loud, weird music played
As of some old, sweet love-lay.

"Overhead, in mute surprise,
He beheld, this knight of old,
A fair face with siren eyes!
All enchained the captive lies
In her soft hair's shining gold.

"Then she said, 'Knight, do not fear,'
Tender was her voice and mild,
'To this leafy cell draw near,
For the maid imprisoned here
Is a royal father's child.

"'High and great my state hath been,
And a throne its watch did keep
O'er my cradle. Castile's queen
My mother was; my sires, I ween,
Now in kingly tombs do sleep.

"'A magic spell around me cast,
Within this heart of oak I dwell,
Until my fifteenth year be past;
To-morrow of evil days the last;
Then I shall leave this mossy cell.

"'As holy men pray, kneeling low
To the dear saints, at Mary's knee,
Dear knight, I pray thee, ere thou go,
Whether or friend or lover thou,
Take me! Bear me away with thee!'"

Agénor could listen no longer. He sprang up as if to awaken himself from a dream, and his eager glance darted towards the plane-trees, while he whispered with feverish hope, —

"Aïssa, Aïssa!"

XVII.

HOW AGÉNOR FOUND AGAIN ONE WHOM HE SOUGHT, AND HOW PRINCE HENRY FOUND ONE WHOM HE WAS NOT SEEKING.

AGÉNOR, once certain that it was Aïssa's voice he had heard, yielded to his first impulse, — a quite natural one in a youth of twenty years. He took his sword, wrapped his mantle about him, and prepared to find his way into the garden; but just as he was about to leap from the window, he felt a hand placed upon his shoulder, and turning beheld his squire.

"Seigneur," observed the latter, "I have remarked that although some of the follies we yield to are committed in passing through doors, the rest and the greater part of them occur from attempting to pass through windows."

Agénor moved as if to continue his descent, but his squire restrained him, respectfully but forcibly.

"Let me go," said the young man.

"Sir," said Musaron, "I only ask you to grant me five minutes. In five minutes I will leave you, free to commit all the follies you choose."

"Do you know where I am going?" said Mauléon.

"I have a suspicion."

"Do you know who is in that garden?"

"The Moorish girl."

"Aïssa herself! You have said it. Now do you think you can keep me here?"

"That depends on whether you are reasonable or a madman."

"What do you mean?"

"The Moorish girl is not alone."

"No; very probably she is with her father who never leaves her."

"And he in turn is always guarded by twelve Moors."

"Even so?"

"Even so! They are all prowling about beneath those trees. You might spring upon one, and kill him, — another comes to his assistance; you might even perhaps kill him, but a third and a fourth and a fifth appear. There would be a struggle, a combat, the clashing of swords; you would be recognized, taken prisoner, and perhaps killed."

"True! But I will see her."

"Fie! the daughter of a Moor!"

"I must see her again."

"I would not hinder you from that; but take no risks in the matter."

"Can you think of any means?"

"Not I — but the prince can aid you."

"The prince? How so?"

"Easily. Do you think he is less interested than you in Mothril's presence at Bordeaux, and that when he knows, he will not be as anxious to learn what brings him here, as you are about the daughter?"

"You are right," said Agénor.

"Ah, you see now, yourself," said Musaron, smiling complacently.

"Well, go and inform the prince. I meanwhile will remain here. I do not intend to lose sight of that small light."

"And you will await our coming patiently?"

"I will listen," said Agénor.

And the sweet voice continued to sing to the night, while the guzla vibrated a tremulous accompaniment. He

saw no longer before him the garden of Bordeaux, but that of the Alcazar, not the white house of the Prince of Wales, but the Moorish kiosque with its overhanging verdure. With every note of the guzla, his heart was penetrated more deeply until he was intoxicated with delight. It did not seem to him that he had been a moment alone, when the door opened, and he saw Musaron enter, followed by the prince, who like himself was wrapped in his mantle, and bore his sword in his hand. In a few words the prince was informed of the situation. Agénor related to him unreservedly his former relations with the beautiful Moorish girl, speaking also of the furious jealousy of Mothril.

"Now," said the prince, "you must endeavor to speak with this woman, for we may learn more from her than from all the spies in the world. A woman held in slavery often rules her despot."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Mauléon, burning with impatience to join Aïssa. "I am ready to obey Your Highness's orders."

"But are you sure it was her voice you heard?"

"As plainly as I now hear yours, monseigneur; it vibrates still in my ear, and would guide me through the darkness of Hell."

"Perhaps! but our greatest difficulty will be in entering the house without falling in with armed troops."

"You say *our* difficulty, monseigneur!"

"Certainly, I shall accompany you; of course it is understood that I shall step aside and leave you free to talk to your mistress."

"Then there is nothing to fear, monseigneur. Two knights like ourselves are worth ten Christians and twenty Moors."

"Yes, but that does not hinder them from creating

scandal, from killing, where a death serves no purpose; and then, fugitives on the morrow, they have sacrificed the success of an important enterprise to a vain delusion. Therefore knight, temper valor with wisdom: revisit your mistress, but use all needful precaution, and above all do not drop your poniard in a garden, or in the apartment of a father or some jealous husband. I dropped mine once in the chamber of Don Guttiero, and it cost me the life of the woman I loved the most."

"Yes, be prudent, be prudent," murmured Musaron.

"But with too much prudence, perchance we shall lose her," answered Agénor.

"Be undisturbed," said Henry. "On the faith of a prince, she shall be my first confiscation from the Moors after I ascend the throne of Castile. Meanwhile let us consider how we may ascend yonder wall."

"I await the commands of Your Highness," said Mauléon, scarcely able to conceal his impatience.

"Now, now," said Henry, "I see that you are a well-disciplined soldier, and matters will fare none the worse for you if you obey my orders. We are captains, and must reconnoitre a little to discover the weak spot, if there be any. We will go down into the garden, examine the walls, and when we have found where they may be scaled most favorably, why, then, we will scale them."

"Yes, seigneur," said Musaron; "but that is not the difficult part of it, for I saw a ladder in the courtyard. One part of the wall is as favorable for our purpose as another; but on the other side of that wall are Moors awaiting us with scimitars and a forest of pikes. My master knows that I am brave, but when the life of so illustrious a prince is concerned, and the life of a knight also so illustrious — "

"Speak for the prince," said Agénor.

"This squire pleases me," said Henry; "he is prudent, and as a rear-guard he will be most useful to us!"

Then raising his voice he added, addressing his squire, who waited at the door, —

"Perajo, are you armed?"

"Yes, monseigneur," answered the squire.

"Then follow us."

Musaron saw that there was no more to be said. All that he had gained by delay amounted merely to this, — that they were leaving by a door and descending a stairway, instead of going through the window.

But, as was his custom, once a matter was decided, he went bravely about the business; as he had said, there was a ladder in the courtyard; this he placed against the wall. The prince desired to mount first; Agénor followed, then Perajo. Musaron came last of all, drew up the ladder, and placed it on the other side of the wall.

"Guard this ladder," said the prince; "the fashion in which you have spoken gives me absolute confidence in you."

Musaron seated himself on the last round of the ladder, Perajo was placed in ambush behind a fig-tree, twenty paces away, while Henry and Agénor continued to advance, keeping in the shadow of the trees which naturally hid them from observation on the part of those who were in the light. They were soon so close to the dwelling that at one moment, when the guzla had ceased, they could hear the sighs of the musician.

"Prince," said Agénor, who could no longer contain his impatience, "wait for me beneath this bower of honeysuckle. Before ten minutes have elapsed I shall have spoken to her, and shall know for what purpose her father has come to Bordeaux. If I am attacked, do not endanger your life by coming to my assistance, but gain

the ladder. I will warn you with one cry, 'To the wall!'"

"If you are attacked," said the prince, "remember that no one perhaps can handle a sword more skilfully than I, unless it be my master, Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin, or my brother, Don Pedro; if you need aid, I will show you that I do not boast vainly."

Agénor thanked the prince, who disappeared from his sight, keeping close to the shadow of the trees. Agénor continued on his way towards the house, but between it and the woods he had to cross a broad space plainly lighted by the moon's rays. He hesitated for a moment, doubting whether it would be prudent to cross that space; just as he was about to venture, a side door of the house opened, grating upon its hinges, and three men passed out, talking together in an undertone. The one who in passing came nearest to Agénor, remained mute, shrouded, and motionless, beneath a great plane-tree; Agénor easily recognized him by his white burnous as Mothril. The central figure of the group was a knight in black armor, and the one who passed nearest to Don Henry wore a rich Castilian costume beneath his purple mantle.

"Seigneur," said the latter with a smile, addressing the knight in black armor, "you must not be displeased with Mothril because he refuses to allow you to see his daughter this evening; even myself, who for the last six weeks have journeyed day and night with him, he scarcely permits to see her for a moment."

The Black Knight answered, but Agénor did not take much notice of his response; he had learned that Aïssa was alone, which was all he desired to know. At the sound of her father's voice she had risen, and, curious as any daughter of the Christians, she was leaning against

her window to watch the three mysterious promenaders. The knight sprang towards the wall, and in two bounds stood beneath her window which was about twenty feet from the ground.

"Aïssa," he said, "dost thou know me?"

Mistress of herself though she was, the young girl recoiled with an involuntary cry, but, recognizing almost at once him who dwelt continually in her thoughts, she extended her arms towards him, saying, —

"Is it thou, Agénor?"

"Yes, my love, it is I; but how shall I reach thee, after finding thee again by miracle? Hast thou a silken ladder?"

"No, but I will have one to-morrow," said she. "My father will pass the night in the prince's castle; come to-morrow, but to-night be careful, for they are at hand."

"Who?" asked Agénor.

"My father, the Black Prince, and the king."

"What king?"

"Don Pedro."

Agénor bethought him of Henry, who perhaps had already found himself face to face with his brother.

"Till to-morrow, then," he said, and darting into the grove, disappeared from sight.

Agénor was not wholly mistaken. The three promenaders had directed their steps towards the very spot where Don Henry was concealed. The prince recognized Mothril first.

"Seigneur," he was saying, as they came within hearing, "Your Highness is wrong in allowing his thoughts to revert continually to Aïssa. The noble son of the King of England, the glorious Prince of Wales, did not come hither to see a poor African girl, but to discuss with you the destiny of a great kingdom."

EDWARD THE BLACK PRINCE.

AGÉNOR DE MAULÉON, I. 258.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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Henry, who had bent forward that he might hear more plainly, drew back.

"The Prince of Wales!" he murmured with unspeakable surprise, looking curiously at his black armor, so well known in Europe since the bloody battles of Crécy and Poitiers.

"To-morrow," said the prince, "I will give you an audience; and then, before we take leave of each other, I trust that all may be arranged so that the affair can be made public. To-day I must conform to the wishes of my royal guest, and avoid awaking the curiosity of courtiers; but before concluding matters, I ought to know exactly the intentions of His Majesty, Don Pedro, King of Castile."

At these words the Black Prince bowed courteously towards the knight in the purple mantle.

Drops of cold sweat stood upon Henry's forehead, but it was quite another matter when he heard a familiar voice utter these words, —

"I am not King of Castile, my lord, but a suppliant compelled to seek succor far from his kingdom, for my most cruel enemies are of mine own house. I had three brothers; one conspired against my honor, the others against my life. The first, who would have robbed me of my honor, I have slain; Henry and Tello remain. Tello is now in Aragon, raising an army against me. Henry is at the court of King Charles, whom he flatters with the hope of conquering my kingdom, whereupon France, now laid waste under your conquests, would obtain new forces from Castile, with which to contend against you. I have thought that it would seem politic to Your Grace to uphold the right of a legitimate monarch, and, with the aid of the money and the forces which he is able to offer you, to continue in his own country a war

which the hypocritical rupture of the last truce warrants you in declaring against France. I await the response of Your Highness, which will decide whether I may hope for my cause, or despair of it."

"Certes, no! You must not despair of it, Don Pedro, for as you have said, it is a legitimate cause. But when I became viceroy of Guyenne, I did not wish to bear the burden of my office alone, and I asked of my father and received of him a council whose wisdom might assist me. I must consult the council; but if the majority there are of my opinion, and yield to my wishes, I assure you that you will have the most faithful and the most energetic ally that has ever fought beneath your banner. To-morrow, when you come to the palace, my answer will be more explicit. Meanwhile, do not permit yourself to be seen by any one. Success will depend upon the utmost secrecy."

"Oh, rest assured upon that matter; besides, no one knows me here."

"And this house is safe," said the prince: "safe enough even to dispel Seigneur Mothril's fears concerning his daughter," he added with a smile.

The Moor stammered some words, which Henry did not hear, for the three promenaders had already withdrawn some distance from him. From the moment Henry had heard the voice he so detested, one burning, eager, and almost uncontrollable desire consumed him. There, only a few steps away from him, stood his mortal enemy, the spectre that stood between him and the object of his ambitions; there, so near him, that his sword could have touched him, was the man who thirsted for his blood, and whose life he longed for. Hatred nerved his hand, and a single blow would have ended all enmity and settled this dispute forever; yet he did not strike that blow,

although the very thought made his heart leap, while his hand clutched at his sword.

For Henry was not a man to yield to his first impulse, even though a mortal hatred inspired it.

"No," he said, "I should slay him, and that would be all. And it is not sufficient to slay him. I must succeed him. For if I should kill him, the Prince of Wales would avenge the death of his guest, and I should perish ignominiously, or suffer lifelong imprisonment. Yes," he continued after a moment's silence, "I might possibly escape, but then there is Tello. How could I forget him!" he murmured, reproving himself with a smile for this oversight concerning his brother and ally. "There is Tello. I should find him upon the throne in my stead, and I should have to start again from the beginning."

This thought stayed his arm. His sword, half unsheathed, returned to its scabbard.

Surely the demons of darkness must have laughed at their infernal sister Ambition, snatching away a poniard from the hand of the aspiring.

Just at this moment, as the three promenaders passed beyond hearing distance, Mothril pronounced the words which the prince had not caught.

Agénor rejoined him at the same moment. One was dejected, the other radiant; for while the prince clinched his hands as though he already felt those iron gauntlets close upon the enemies he longed to crush, while he dreamed of the day when he should be secure upon the throne of Castile, the lover had forgotten all things relating to war and intrigue, had forgotten even his princes, and indeed every being in the world save one.

XVIII.

THE BLOODHOUND.

THE secret motive for Mothril's journey to Bordeaux was already explained, and Aïssa could enlighten the knight no further upon that subject; but there were other matters of far deeper import to both. They had not yet exchanged the innumerable confidences forever new to every new pair of lovers, and even more novel for Agénor and Aïssa, because their moments together had been all too brief.

But Henry was informed of his brother's plans from another source, and had they been imparted to himself, his brother's designs could hardly have been more transparent to him. He read in advance the answer of the Prince of Wales as well as though he were to be present at that council which was to take place on the morrow. Thoroughly convinced that Don Pedro would obtain the assistance of the English, nothing now remained for him but to leave Bordeaux at once, before the compact of alliance was sworn; for once that had been done, if he were recognized he would be made prisoner-of-war, and Don Pedro, in order to end the quarrel with a single blow, would have recourse to that same expeditious method which he himself would have put in execution against his brother, had not ambition and calculation restrained his hand.

The prince and the knight conversed together, the latter addressing his prudent companion with sage counsel as to what must now be done, and advising him to set out at once for Aragon that he might be there to re-

ceive the first companies the constable should send; and when that topic had been disposed of, the prince turned his attention to his young companion's affairs.

"And your love affair?" said he.

"Monseigneur," answered Agénor, "I will not conceal from you that the thought of it fills me with bitter sorrow. It was sweet to behold so near me the happiness I have dreamed of this many a day, fearing that I must pursue and never attain it, and yet —"

"And yet," repeated the prince, "what has happened? What hinders you, — you who have no brother to contend with you, no throne to conquer, — what hinders you from enjoying this happiness while it lasts?"

"Shall you not set out at once, my prince?"

"I shall assuredly," answered Henry. "For though I feel in my heart a tender friendship for you, it must not, you yourself can readily understand, weigh with me as much as the royal interests that are involved, and the welfare of an entire nation. If it were your life that is at stake, ah! that would be very different. In that case I would sacrifice my fortune and my ambition for your sake."

And the keen glance of the prince sought to read the young Frenchman's frank, transparent countenance, hoping to find gratitude written there.

"But," continued Henry, "I could not sacrifice my crown to your passion, — a mad one, let me say, — your passion for this Moorish girl, the daughter of that traitor, Mothril."

"I know that well, monseigneur, and I was mad indeed to conceive such a hope; and so, my poor Aïssa, farewell!"

And he looked out sorrowfully upon the pavilion, concealed by the sycamore-trees. The prince could not restrain a smile.

"Happy lover," he murmured, and then his face became grave again. "Happy lover! one thought alone fills his heart, and sweetens existence for him. He lives for naught else. Alas! I too have suffered all that torture mingled with delight, which causes every generous and youthful emotion to stir the soul to its depths."

"You call me happy, monseigneur," exclaimed Agénor. "Aïssa expected me to-morrow. To-morrow I should have seen her, and now I shall not. Ah, monseigneur, if a youth may be termed unhappy who is forced to abandon each hope his heart has conceived at the very moment when all his hopes are about to be realized,— if such a one may be termed unhappy, then I am the unhappiest of men!"

"You are right, Agénor," said the prince. "Live in the present. Your ambition craves not wealth, seeks no crown; a loving word, a first kiss can satisfy you. Your wealth is a woman's heart, your throne the flowery bank she will share with you on the morrow. Oh, do not lose this evening, Agénor, for some day it may seem the fairest pearl in all the casket of your youthful memories."

"But, monseigneur, will you depart without me?"

"This very night I must leave English territory; you can understand that the sooner I find myself upon neutral ground the better. I shall remain three or four days in Navarre, at Pampeluna. Overtake me as speedily as possible, Agénor, for I cannot await you longer than that."

"Oh, my prince," said Agénor, "to leave you when danger threatens you! It seems to me that I ought not to consent to that, not even for all the riches of the love that awaits me, and which you pictured."

"Do not exaggerate, Agénor; no danger threatens

me in setting out this evening. Go, seek your flowery bank! Go! go! Perajo will accompany me, and you know that he is a good swordsman; but return speedily."

"But, monseigneur — "

"And — listen to me. If you love this Moorish girl, as you say — "

"Ah, monseigneur, I cannot say how much! And yet, I have scarcely seen her; I have scarcely exchanged two words with her."

"But two words are sufficient when they are well-chosen, and spoken in our fair Castilian tongue. I was about to say, if you love this Moorish girl, so much the better, for you will achieve a twofold triumph, — you will rob Mothril of a daughter, and Hell of a soul."

He who spoke these words was both a king and a friend. Agénor realized that Henry of Trastamare played this double rôle in his behalf; and that Agénor might play his own part equally well, he knelt before the prince, to whom all his interests seemed so insignificant that even while he referred to them his thoughts were far away, soaring among the distant Pyrenean mountains, among the clouds that crown the lofty peaks of the Sierra Aracena.

And so it was decided that the prince should rest a few hours, and then set out for the frontier. As for Mauléon, free for the time, the golden chain which bound him to the prince broken for a moment, he no longer lived upon earth, but swam in heaven.

The lover's slumber, if not deep, is at least a prolonged one, for it is filled with dreams that unite him with the beloved one; and the dream and the happiness are so real, that he is scarcely able to arouse himself from that slumber.

When Agénor opened his eyes, the sun was already high in the heavens. He called Musaron at once, and learned from him that the prince had mounted his steed at four in the morning, and had left Bordeaux behind him, with all the celerity of one who realizes to the utmost the dangers and difficulties that beset him.

"Well!" he said, after he had heard his squire's version of the departure, enlivened by one of those running commentaries which Musaron considered it his duty to add upon every possible occasion, — "well, Musaron, as for us, we will remain at Bordeaux to-day, and perhaps to-morrow as well, and during this time it is understood that we must not stir abroad. We must not be seen by any one. And we shall be all the fresher at the moment of our departure, which may come at any time. As for you, my friend, take the best of care of the horses, for they must help us to overtake the prince, even if we have to tax their strength and swiftness to the utmost."

"Ha, ha!" said Musaron, who, it will be remembered, enjoyed perfect freedom of speech in the young knight's presence, especially when the latter was in good humor. "This time politics has nothing at all to do with the matter, and we have other business in hand! Now perhaps if I were to know what it is I might be able to help you."

"You shall see for yourself at midnight, Musaron; meanwhile, be still and secret, and do what I tell you."

Musaron, always charmed with himself because of his boundless confidence in his own resources, curried the horses, gave them twice their usual rations, and waited for midnight to come, without showing his nose at a single window.

It was not so with Agénor. From behind the shut-

ters his eyes were riveted upon the neighboring house, never once losing it from sight.

But, as we have already said, it was late when Agénor arose, and as Musaron had imitated his master, and had watched the previous night, even later than he, neither of them was astir early enough to notice, just at daybreak, the figure of a man in the garden adjoining Don Pedro's dwelling. He was stooping, studying the ground, and anxiety was written upon his face, as he asked himself what was the meaning of certain imprints left in the fresh soil of the garden, and what had caused the branches in the thicket about Aïssa's dwelling to be crushed and broken in places.

This man, who was concealed in a large mantle, was Mothril. With all the sagacity peculiar to his race, he was comparing the different footprints, following them as a bloodhound follows a trail, never permitting himself to be turned aside for a moment, not even when the trail was broken in places.

"Yes," said the Moor, and his nostrils dilated, his eyes sparkled, "yes, here are my steps along this path. I recognize the shape of my slippers. And here, beside them, are the footprints of the Prince of Wales; he had iron heels, and the weight of his armor made these prints still deeper. And here are Don Pedro's footprints; they can scarcely be distinguished, for his step is as light as a deer's. One footprint follows another; but these strange footprints, — whose are these? I do not know them."

And then Mothril approached the bower of honeysuckle near the thicket where Agénor had remained so long in concealment. "Here," he said, "the footprints are deeper, farther apart, varied. But where do they come from, and where were they going? Towards the

house! Yes, they extend to the foot of the wall. Here they are deeper again. Whoever waited here must have stood upon tiptoe, trying to reach to the balcony; his designs surely had to do with Aïssa. But was Aïssa in league with him? We must try to discover that!"

And, stooping, the Moor examined this footprint seriously, much disturbed by it.

After a moment, he resumed, "This is the step of a man who was booted like a French knight. Here is the trace made by his spur; now we shall see where it comes from."

And he followed the track, which led him to the honeysuckle bower. Here his investigations began again.

"Surely some one else has been here," he muttered, "for these footprints are not like the others. Doubtless this one came towards us while the other went towards Aïssa. We passed so near to him that we must have brushed against him. He must have overheard us. Now what were we saying as we passed through here?"

And Mothril tried to remember what he and his two companions were saying at that spot.

But it was not the political situation that concerned him most at that moment, and he quickly resumed his study of the footprints.

Then he discovered that they extended in a direct line to the wall. Three men had descended from it; one had reached the fig-tree, and had remained concealed there, for the lower branches of the tree were broken. He was merely the sentinel of the party.

The second had gone as far as the honeysuckle bower; he was a spy.

But the third had reached the thicket, and had stood

there a moment; from this point he had gained Aïssa's pavilion; he was surely a lover.

Mothril followed these footprints again, and they led him to the foot of the wall which separated the house of Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe from the pavilion sold to the Prince of Wales. Then all became clear as day to him.

For the ends of the ladder had made two holes in the ground, and the top of it had scraped the coping of the wall.

"They all came from this spot," said the Moor. And then he raised himself to the top of the wall, and glanced eagerly into Ernauton's garden; but it was then early in the morning, and we have already said that Agénor and Musaron had slept late. Mothril saw nothing, but he noticed the track of footsteps leading to the house.

"I will watch," he said.

All that day the Moor attempted to gain information in the neighborhood, but Ernauton's servants were discreet; and, moreover, they did not know Henry of Trastamare, and saw Agénor himself for the first time, and they said so little, — answering every question merely with, "Our guest is the adopted son of Seigneur Ernauton de Sainte-Colombe," — they gave the Moor and his spy so little information, that he decided to depend only upon himself.

Night fell. The King Don Pedro was expected with his faithful ambassador at the palace of the Prince of Wales. At the hour appointed for the visit, Mothril was ready, and, accompanying the prince, shared in the deliberation with the air of a man whom no hidden cares can distract from the performance of his duty.

Maulĕon, meanwhile, had only waited for the Moor's departure. As soon as he knew that Aïssa was alone, he

took his sword, as on the previous evening, ordered his squire to have the horses saddled and waiting for him in the courtyard, and, availing himself of the ladder, which he placed in the same spot as before, he descended safely into the garden of the Prince of Wales.

The night was like one of those fair Oriental nights, filled with perfume and mystery. Such a night had preceded this; such a one, perhaps, was to follow.

Nothing disturbed the serenity of Agénor's heart, unless it was the very plenitude of his joy; for that which we call foreboding is perhaps nothing more than excess of felicity, which causes us to tremble lest the fragile happiness just within our reach may be shattered by so many shocks.

He who does not fear to lose his happiness does not know what happiness is, and rarely has the bravest lover gone to a tryst with his mistress without some foreboding.

Aïssa's heart glowed with all the fervid passion of a daughter of the South; it was filled with uncontrollable emotions. All day long she thought of the preceding night, and the night about to follow; the one seemed to her like some dream, and the other she awaited as the supreme realization of earthly felicity. Kneeling beside the open window, drinking, in deep draughts, every perfume-laden breath, she had ceased to exist except in the being of her lover; though she could neither see nor hear him, a thousand sympathetic sensations revealed his presence; in the mysterious darkness and the sublime silence of the night she felt that he was near her.

Suddenly she heard a rustling sound among the leaves; her face, covered with joyous blushes, she bent among the flowers that covered her balcony.

The sound grew louder; she heard a timid and uncer-

tain step trampling the plants underfoot, announcing that her lover was approaching.

Then he appeared in the great band of silvery light with which the moon flooded the space between the grove and the house.

And then, light as a swallow, the beautiful Moorish girl, who had waited only for this apparition, fastened herself by a long silken cord attached to the stone balcony, and glided down along its length, and fell into her lover's arms, framing his face in her tapering fingers.

"It is I," she said. "I waited for you."

And Mauléon, lost in love, and thrilled with a new delight, felt his lips captive beneath a burning kiss.

XIX.

LOVE.

But though he had lost all power of speech, Mauléon could still act. He drew Aïssa rapidly towards the honeysuckle bower which had protected Henry of Trastamare the night before; and when the beautiful Moorish girl was seated upon a grassy bank, he fell upon his knees.

"I waited for thee," said Aïssa again.

"For me!" he repeated.

"Yes," answered the young girl; "and I have not waited since yesterday only, but from the first day I beheld you!"

"You love me, then!" exclaimed Agénor, who had reached the climax of his happiness.

"I love thee," repeated the young girl. "And thou, — lovest thou me?"

"Oh, yes, yes; I love you," he answered.

"I love you because you are brave," said Aïssa. "Now, why do you love me?"

"Because you are beautiful," said Agénor.

"True — thou know'st my face — and no more of me — but I — I have heard tell of your deeds!"

"Then you know I am your father's enemy?"

"Yes."

"And that I am not merely his enemy, but between us two it is war unto death?"

"I know that."

"And you know that I hate Mothril, and still you do not hate me?"

"I love thee!"

"And, indeed, you are right to love me, in spite of that. For I hate this man because he led Don Frederic, my brother-in-arms, away to be butchered. I hate him because he assassinated the unfortunate Blanche de Bourbon. And, above all, I hate him because he guards thee as though thou wert his wife and not his child. Are you really his child, Aïssa?"

"Listen. I myself cannot tell. I remember a day, when a mere child, I awoke from a prolonged slumber; and opening my eyes, the first face that I saw was this man's. He calls me his child, and I have called him father; but I do not love him, — he frightens me."

"Is he ever unkind or cruel to you?"

"On the contrary, a queen herself could not be served more promptly than I am. Each of my desires is a command. I have only to signify my wish and I am obeyed. Every thought of his seems in some way to relate to me. I do not know what schemes of his my life can serve, but often I am terrified by the gloomy, jealous tenderness he shows me."

"Then you do not love him as a child should love her father?"

"I am afraid of him, Agénor. Listen: sometimes in the night he steals into my chamber like a spirit, and I shudder. He approaches the couch where I repose, and his step is so light that it scarcely awakens my women, sleeping upon their mats, as he passes among them, his feet scarcely seeming to touch the earth. My eyelids quiver with terror; yet, although they are almost closed, I can see his horrible smile. Then he comes nearer; he bends over my couch; his breath devours my face, and his kiss — whether it is more like a lover's or a father's kiss I do not know, but it burns my forehead like a red-

hot iron. This vision assails me nightly, — a vision full of reality. In terror I fall asleep each night; and yet something tells me I need not tremble, for, I repeat, sleeping or waking, I seem to exercise a strange power over him: his proud and piercing glance quails before mine. But why speak to me of Mothril, my brave knight; thou dost not fear him, thou who art so fearless!"

"No, no; I have no fears save for thy sake —"

"For my sake, because thou lov'st me so!" said Aïssa, with an enchanting smile.

"Aïssa, no one of my countrywomen ever moved me to love her, and yet they are very fair. I myself have often wondered at this indifference, but now I know why. It was that my heart's love might belong wholly to thee. You ask me if I love you, Aïssa; hear, and judge. If you should ask me to leave all, to renounce everything for you, everything save honor, — well, Aïssa, I would make that sacrifice."

"And I," said the young girl, a divine smile lighting her face — "I, for thee, would do still more: for thee I would sacrifice my God and my honor."

Agénor had not learned to comprehend the poetic ardor of Oriental passion; but he divined something of it when Aïssa smiled.

"But," he said, his arms enfolding her, "I do not wish that thou should'st sacrifice God or honor to me; I would link thy life with mine. In my country, Aïssa, when a man loves a woman, she becomes his friend, in life and death; and when she has received his faith, is sure that she will never be consigned to some harem where she must serve the new mistresses of him she loved. Become a Christian, Aïssa; leave Mothril, and you shall be my wife."

"I would have asked that of thee," said the young girl.

Agénor rose, and at the same moment clasped his mistress in his nervous arms, heart beating against heart. Her soft and perfumed locks caressed his face lightly; joy intoxicated his soul; he hastened towards the part of the wall where he had left the ladder.

He scarcely felt the weight of that precious burden, and he darted, swift as an arrow, through the thicket and along the borders of the walks leading towards the wall.

He saw its dark outline rising before him, through a hedge, when suddenly Aïssa, supple as an adder, glided from his arms, her body barely grazing his.

Mauléon paused; the Moorish girl sank at his feet, extending her hands in the direction of the wall.

"Look!" she said.

And Mauléon, looking in the direction her finger pointed, perceived a white figure crouching behind the lower part of the ladder.

"Oh," said Agénor to himself, "that must be Musaron; he is probably afraid something may happen to me, and is keeping guard for us. But, no," he added, shaking his head, "Musaron is too prudent for that. He would never expose himself where he might receive a sword-thrust unawares."

The figure rose, and drew from its belt something which flashed in the moonlight.

"Mothril!" cried Aïssa.

As if this terrible word had startled him out of a dream, Agénor drew his sword.

Doubtless the Moor had not yet seen the young girl, or had not recognized her, for the sight of a Christian bearing a Moorish maiden in his arms was a strange one

for him; but the moment he heard the girl's cry his tall, slender figure emerged from the shadow, and, uttering an awful cry, he sprang towards Agénor.

But again love was swifter than hate.

With a movement swift as lightning, Aïssa lowered the visor of the knight's helmet, concealing his face, and the Moor found himself face to face with an iron statue, encircled by his daughter's arms.

Mothril hesitated.

"Aïssa," he murmured, despairingly, his arms falling at his side.

"Yes, Aïssa," she said, a fierce energy in her voice, that thrilled Mauléon and caused the Moor to shudder. "It is Aïssa! Would you slay her? Strike! As for him, you know well he has no fear of you."

And she indicated Agénor with a gesture.

Mothril extended his arm as if to seize her; she recoiled, and Agénor faced him, motionless, his sword in his hand.

And such intense hatred flashed from the Moor's eye that Agénor lifted his sword.

Then he felt Aïssa's hand touch his arm, arresting its movement.

"No," she said, "do not strike him before me. You are strong, armed, and invulnerable,— pass on, and leave him."

"Oh, he is strong, armed, and invulnerable?" said the Moor. "We shall see;" and he overturned the ladder with his foot.

At the same moment a shrill whistle was heard, and twelve Moors appeared, axes and scimitars in their hands.

"Ah, Infidel dogs," cried Mauléon, "come on, and we shall see!"

"Death to the Christian!" cried Mothril. "Slay him!"

"Fear not," said Aïssa.

And with a calm, firm step, she advanced and placed herself between the knight and his adversaries.

"Mothril," she said, "I desire that this youth should leave here safe and sound; do you hear? He shall not perish, — or woe to you if one hair of his head is harmed."

"Then you love this wretch," exclaimed the Moor.

"I love him," said Aïssa.

"An additional reason why he must die. Strike!" said the Moor.

"Mothril," cried the young girl, with a frown, "did you not hear what I said? Must I repeat to you a second time that this youth is to leave this place at once?" and her eyes flashed lightning.

"Strike!" cried the Moor, furiously.

Agénor made a movement as if to defend himself.

"Wait," she said, "and you shall see how this tiger will become a lamb!" And with these words she drew from her girdle a fine, sharp poniard, and, baring her beautiful bosom, golden as the pomegranates of Valencia, she placed the sharp point of the poniard against her breast, which yielded at the dangerous pressure.

The Moor uttered a cry of anguish.

"Listen," she cried. "By the God of the Arabs, whom I renounce, by the God of the Christians, who henceforth shall be my God, I swear to you that if the least harm happens to this youth I will kill myself."

"Aïssa," cried the Moor, "mercy! you will drive me mad."

"Then throw away your kandjiar," said the young girl.

The Moor obeyed.

"Order your slaves to depart."

At a motion from Mothril they did so.

Aïssa gazed slowly about her, with the air of a queen who desires to be assured that she is obeyed.

Then, her eyes moist with tenderness, and glowing with longing, "Farewell, Agénor," she said, in a low voice; "come to me. I must say farewell."

"Wilt thou not follow me?" asked the young man.

"No, for he would sooner slay me than lose me. I must remain in order to save us both."

"But you love me still?" asked Mauléon.

"See yonder star," said Aïssa, pointing to the brightest one in the most brilliant of all the constellations which sparkled in the firmament.

"Yes, yes, I see!" said Agénor.

Aïssa answered, "Though the light of that star should be quenched in the heavens, the love my heart holds for thee shall not perish. Farewell."

And raising the visor of her lover's helmet, while the Moor wrung his hands, she pressed a prolonged kiss upon his lips.

"Now go," said Aïssa to the knight; "but be in readiness for anything that may happen."

And standing at the foot of the ladder which Agénor had placed against the wall, she gazed at the young man with a smile, extending her hand towards Mothril, like some tiger-tamer, at whose least gesture the beast, about to devour its prey, crouches submissively.

"Farewell," said Agénor for the last time; "remember your promise."

"Farewell until we meet again," answered the beautiful Moorish girl. "I shall keep it."

Agénor kissed her for the last time, and ascended to the other side of the wall.

The Moor gave a cry at seeing his prey escape him.

"Now," said Aïssa to Mothril, "do not let me observe that you watch me too closely; do not let me suspect that you treat me as a slave, for you know the means of my liberation is in my own hands. Come, my father, it is late; let us re-enter the house."

Mothril allowed her to retrace her steps towards the pavilion, slowly and dreamily. He replaced his poniard, and his hand passed across his forehead.

"Child," he said, "a few months, a few days from now, perhaps, you will no longer doubt Mothril!"

At the moment when the young girl was about to enter, Mothril heard the sound of footsteps behind him.

"Go in quickly, Aïssa," he said; "it is the king!"

The young girl entered, but as slowly as though she had not heard a single word. Mothril saw her disappear, and a moment later the king stood at his side.

"Well," said Don Pedro, "victory, friend Mothril; we have won! But why did you leave the council the very moment its deliberations began?"

"Because," answered Mothril, "I did not think that there was room for a poor Moorish slave in a gathering of such mighty Christian princes."

"You lie, Mothril," said the king; "you were disturbed about your daughter, and you returned to watch her."

"Why, my lord," said Mothril, smiling to see how this one thought absorbed the king's attention, "upon my honor, one might say that you think about my daughter oftener even than I do."

And both entered the house, the king casting a curious glance towards the window of the pavilion, upon which was outlined the figure of a woman.

XX.

WHEREIN WE SEE THAT MESSIRE BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN WAS AS GOOD AN ARITHMETICIAN AS HE WAS A GREAT GENERAL.

WHILE Prince Henry of Trastamare and his companion, Agénor, were travelling towards Bordeaux, where awaited them the events we have just described, Du Guesclin, vested with complete powers by Charles V., had gathered the principal leaders of the Companies, and was explaining to them his plan of campaign.

These plunderers were better acquainted with the tactics of military science than might be supposed; for, like the rapacious vultures they resembled, like wolves, their nearest of kin, they were accustomed to that daily exercise of vigilance, industry, and resolution which elevates vulgar men above their kind, and causes a superior man to be recognized as a genius.

With wonderful quickness they comprehended the general features of the plan of campaign communicated to them by the Breton hero, — that combination of details which may always be decided upon in advance, but whose special results depend largely upon circumstances.

But when they had heard the whole of the constable's bellicose project, they argued upon it by raising a single objection which was unanswerable. Money was needed.

And it is only fair to state that there was unanimity in their objection, and the argument found not a single dissenting voice.

"True," replied Du Guesclin; "I have thought of that."

The leaders, by an inclination of the head, informed him that they were grateful for this forethought.

"But," added Du Guesclin, "you will have money after the first battle."

"Meanwhile we must live and pay something to our soldiers," replied the Green Knight.

"Unless we are to continue to live upon the French peasant," answered Caverley. "And then their outcries! These peasants are devilish fellows, — always complaining; and their groans would wound the ears of our illustrious constable. Besides, what is the use of trying to be an 'honest captain' if one must continue to steal just as when he was a mere adventurer?"

"Just, most just!" answered Du Guesclin.

"And besides," observed Claude the Plunderer, another worthy member of this band of howling wolves, a rascal who was considered less ferocious than Caverley but a hundred times as treacherous in his plundering, — "I must say," he went on, "we are now the allies of the King of France, for we are going to avenge the death of his sister-in-law; and how can we remain worthy of this honor, — an honor inestimable for humble adventurers like ourselves, — if we do not, for a time at least, cease from preying upon the people of our royal ally?"

"Judicious and profound!" answered Du Guesclin; "but tell me, how would you propose to raise this money?"

"It is not our business to raise this money, but to receive it," answered Caverley.

"That is unanswerable," said Du Guesclin, "and the doctor himself is not a better logician than you are, Sir Hugues; come, then, what do you ask?"

The leaders interrogated one another with their eyes, and all of them committed the general interest to Caverley's care, for he resumed, —

"We shall be reasonable, messire constable, on the faith of a captain."

At a promise accompanied by that oath, Du Guesclin shuddered from head to foot.

"I am waiting," he said; "speak."

"Well," said Caverley, "suppose that Monseigneur Charles V. should pay the mere sum of a gold crown a head for each man, until we reach the enemy's country? 'T is little enough, certainly; but we would accept it in consideration of the honor conferred upon us in being his allies, and our demands are modest out of regard for this worthy prince. We have somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty thousand soldiers."

"Almost that number," said Du Guesclin.

"More or less!"

"Somewhat less, I fancy."

"It does not matter," said Caverley; "for, whatever the number, we undertake to do with them what others would accomplish with fifty thousand, and so it is precisely the same as if we had that number."

"Fifty thousand gold crowns then," said Bertrand.

"Yes, for the soldiers," said Caverley.

"What more?" inquired Du Guesclin.

"What more? the officers remain."

"True," said the constable. "I was forgetting the officers. Now, how much would you give them?"

"I think," interrupted the Green Knight, doubtless fearing that Caverley might give too modest an estimate of their value, "that these brave men, who for the most part are disciplined and prudent, are well worth five crowns a head; for consider that nearly all of them have valets, squires, and grooms, — men, to say nothing of three horses apiece!"

"*Peste!*" exclaimed Bertrand; "these officers are better served than those of my master the king."

"We will agree to the amount the Green Knight has named," said Caverley.

"Five gold crowns apiece, you say."

"Yes, and in my opinion, that is the very lowest amount which we could accept for them. I was about to ask six crowns myself, but since the Green Knight has made it five, I will not dispute what he has said."

Bertrand looked at them, and saw that he would have a close struggle with these Jews whom his master had intrusted him to negotiate with.

"Cursed knaves!" he thought to himself, while outwardly he assumed his most gracious smile. "If I were only strong enough, how I would hang every one of you!"

Then he said aloud: —

"Messieurs, you perceive my delay in answering your demand. I have reflected, and five crowns for each officer does not seem to me too high a price."

"Well, now!" ejaculated the Green Knight, amazed at the rapidity of Du Guesclin's calculation.

"And how many officers have you?" queried Messire Bertrand.

Caverley gazed at the ceiling, then at his comrades, and again their glances were eloquent.

"I have a thousand," said Caverley. He doubled the actual number.

"I have eight hundred," said the Green Knight.

Which was merely thrice the number.

The others imitated this generous example, till they had four thousand officers in all.

"An officer for every eleven soldiers," said Du Guesclin, admiringly. "*Jarni Dieu!* what a magnificent army it must be, and what discipline you must have in it!"

"Yes," said Caverley, modestly, "we consider that it is fairly well managed."

"Twenty thousand crowns then," said Bertrand.

"Gold crowns," observed the Green Knight.

"*Pardieu!* twenty thousand gold crowns we will call it, which, with the fifty thousand already agreed to, makes seventy thousand crowns."

"Exactly so; that is the amount even to a carolus," said the Green Knight, still admiring the facility with which the constable added.

"But —" interposed Caverley.

Bertrand did not allow him to finish this sentence.

"'But' — I know what you were about to say, — we were forgetting the chiefs."

Caverley's eyes opened widely.

Not only did Bertrand recognize the justice of his objection, but he also anticipated it.

"You forgot yourselves," he continued, — "noble disinterestedness; but I do not forget you, not I, messieurs. Now then, let us count you. There are ten of you, are there not?"

The adventurers counted after Du Guesclin. They would gladly have made their number twenty, but they were unable to do so.

"Ten leaders," they repeated.

Caverley, the Green Knight, and Claude the Plunderer continued to gaze at the ceiling.

"Which makes, at three thousand gold crowns for each chief, thirty thousand gold crowns in all, does it not?"

Dazzled, suffocated, overwhelmed by such munificence, the leaders rose at these words, and as delighted with the enormous sum at which they were valued, as by that relative valuation of their merit which considered a leader

of as great worth as three thousand of his men, they brandished their gigantic swords in the air, tossed up their helmets, and cried, or rather yelled, "Noël! Noël! Montjoie! Long live the good constable!"

"Ah, brigands!" murmured that hero to himself, bowing like a hypocrite, and as if touched to the heart by the acclamations of the adventurers; "with the aid of our Lord, and our Lady of Mount Carmel, I will lead you to a place whence not one of you shall return!"

Then he added aloud,—

"Total, one hundred thousand gold crowns, which will settle all our account."

"Noël! Noël!" repeated the adventurers, having reached the very climax of enthusiasm.

"Now, messieurs," said Du Guesclin, "you have my knightly word that this sum shall be paid before you enter upon the campaign; only, you understand, you cannot have it all at once. I do not carry the royal treasure upon my person."

"True," answered the chiefs, too overjoyed to be very exacting at that moment.

"It is understood then, messieurs, that you will trust the King of France for this sum, upon the word of his constable," he added, tossing up his head with that magnificent air which could make even the boldest tremble, "and that word is inviolate; and if the money has not come at the moment when we set out for Spain, then, messieurs, I pledge you two things: your freedom which I give you from that moment, and a prisoner who, at the very least, is worth one hundred thousand gold crowns."

"Who is that?" asked Caverley.

"Myself, by God!" responded Du Guesclin, "myself; for poor as I am, if the women of my country had to

spin night and day to earn that ransom money for me, I promise you the ransom would be paid."

"Agreed," answered the leaders unanimously, touching the constable's hand in token of the compact.

"When shall we leave?" asked the Green Knight.

"At once, if you wish, messieurs."

"At once," repeated Caverley; "for in truth, messieurs, as there is nothing to be gained by remaining here, the sooner we go elsewhere the better I shall like it."

Then they returned to their posts, and above each tent a banner waved, the drums began to beat; soon the whole camp was in commotion. The crowd of soldiers which had hastened to meet Du Guesclin turned again towards the tents of the leaders, and that stream of people surged onward like billows moving out to sea.

Two hours later their tents were struck, beasts bent beneath the weight they bore, horses were neighing, and lances gleamed and flashed beneath the sun's rays.

Meanwhile, upon the banks of the river might be seen fugitive peasants long held in slavery, who seized the first moment of liberty, restored to them somewhat tardily, to gather about their deserted firesides their wives and their belongings, somewhat the worse for wear.

Towards noon the army began its march, descending the Saône in two columns, one following the left bank of the river, the other, the right; it seemed not unlike one of those great barbaric migrations bent upon some terrible mission sent them from Heaven, under the leadership of one of those scourges of God, named Alaric, or Genseric, or Attila.

But their leader was the good constable, Bertrand Du Guesclin. He rode behind his banner, pensive, his head bent upon his huge shoulders; and he said to himself as he curbed his robust steed's pace to a trot, —

"All this is well enough if it lasts; but money? Where am I to get that? And if I do not get it, how will the king assemble an army strong enough to shut out these brigands, when they return from the Pyrenees, greedier than ever?"

Plunged in gloomy thoughts, the good knight continued on his way, glancing around from time to time at that motley, tumultuous multitude he commanded, and his busy brain did more work than the brains of all the fifty thousand adventurers put together.

Yet they had dreams, and Heaven only knows what they were dreaming of; already each one fancied himself ruler of all India, and as that country was then but little known, their dreams were all the wilder.

Suddenly, just as the sun slipped behind the last orange band of light that marked the horizon, the leaders, who followed the good knight, and began to marvel at his taciturnity, saw him raise his head, shake his shoulders victoriously, crying to his servants,—

"Holà, Jacelard! holà, Bernequet! a flagon of wine, and the best that you have in your wagons."

Then he muttered behind his visor,—

"By our Lady of Auray, I believe I can get that hundred thousand crowns without troubling good King Charles in the least!"

Then turning to the leaders, who had been somewhat disturbed since the beginning of the journey at seeing their leader so bowed with care, he said in his sonorous voice, —

"*Jarni Dieu!* messieurs, shall we drink a little?"

As this was an invitation the adventurers never declined, they hastened to respond to it, and drained a generous draught to the health of the King of France.

XXI.

WHEREIN WE SHALL SEE A POPE DEFRAY THE EXPENSES OF EXCOMMUNICATION.

THE army continued its march. "All roads lead to Rome," and with still more exactness we may say that the Avignon road leads to Spain.

And so the adventurers proceeded upon the Avignon road with confident footsteps.

For at Avignon Pope Urban V. was then holding his court. A Benedictine in earlier days, and afterwards Abbé of Saint Germain d'Auxerre and Prior of Saint Victor of Marseilles, he had been elected as pope upon the sole condition that he was in nowise to disturb either cardinals or Roman princes in their terrestrial beatitude, — a condition which, from the moment of his election, he was eager to observe with rigorous exactness and the utmost benignity, for through this means he hoped to die a natural death, and departing, leave behind him an odor of sanctity; and his desire was fulfilled.

It will be remembered that Saint Peter's successor had been moved by the complaints of the King of France concerning the inroads of the Free Companies, and he had excommunicated them, — a master-stroke of diplomacy whose unpleasant consequences the intelligent foresight of Charles V. had anticipated. The king had made Du Guesclin of his opinion, and, since the interview with the constable, the latter was animated by a very strong desire that matters should be readjusted, and everything be as before.

Now the thought that had come to Du Guesclin was an inspiration. It came to him on the highway, between Châlon and Lyon, just at the close of that sunset whose beauty we dismissed with a single word, so deeply occupied we ourselves had become with the taciturnity of the good constable. He would take his fifty thousand adventurers, more or less, as Caverley had said, and pay a visit to Pope Urban V.

This visit would prove the more timely as, each moment the adventurers came nearer to the pontiff's dominion, all their ferocious and bellicose instincts revived. However harmless their excommunication had been, their wrath at receiving it had in nowise abated. And indeed they had been lambs long enough.

When they came within two leagues of the town, Bertrand ordered a halt, and commanded them to spread their front so that it might encircle the town, and present the most imposing appearance; it formed an immense arc, whose chord was the river itself.

Then mounting his horse, accompanied by a dozen warriors and French cavaliers of his suite, he presented himself at the gate of Vaucluse and asked for an audience with the sovereign pontiff.

Urban, perceiving this horde of brigands descending upon him like some vast inundation, had gathered about him his army of two or three thousand men, and, knowing well the valor of his principal division, he prepared to make use of the keys of Saint Peter, meaning they should descend upon the heads of the adventurers with a force which should be fully felt.

But, truth to tell, in the depths of his heart he believed that these bandits, overwhelmed by the fact of their excommunication, had come to ask pardon, and offer atonement for their sins by a new crusade, believing that

this humble and submissive spirit would be valued because of their strength and their numbers.

And he went forth to meet the constable with an alacrity that greatly surprised the latter. The pope was dining at the time upon the terrace shaded with orange-trees and oleanders, and in company with his brother, Angelo Grinvald, a canon whom he had promoted to the bishopric of Avignon, one of the principal sees of Christendom.

"Is it you, Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin?" exclaimed the pope. "Is it you who have brought hither this army, which has come upon us without our knowing whence it comes, or for what purpose?"

"Alas, alas, Holy Father, I am its commander!" said the constable, kneeling.

"Then I breathe again!" said the pope. "And I also!" added Angelo, his breast heaving with a deep, glad sigh of relief.

"Is that so, Holy Father?" asked Bertrand; and he too sighed, — a sigh as sorrowful and profound as though the whole weight of pontifical oppression had descended upon him.

"And why do you breathe again, Holy Father?" he continued.

"Because I know their intentions."

"I do not believe it!" said Bertrand.

"Are not you their leader, constable, — a man who respects the Church?"

"Oh, yes, yes, Holy Father, I respect the Church," said the constable.

"Why, then, dear son, you are indeed welcome! But what would this army of me? Inform us."

"To begin with," said Bertrand, evading this question, and delaying an explanation as long as possible, "to begin with, Your Holiness will learn with pleasure,

doubtless, that we are about to engage in a mighty war against infidels."

Urban directed towards his brother a glance which seemed to say, "Now! was I mistaken?"

Then, satisfied with this fresh proof of infallibility he had just given himself, he turned again towards the constable.

"A war against infidels, my son," he repeated with unction.

"Yes, Holy Father."

"And what infidels, my son?"

"Against the Moors in Spain."

"'T is an excellent idea, constable, and worthy of a Christian hero; for I presume that you are responsible for it."

"Good King Charles and I, Holy Father."

"But you will share the glory; and God will guide the brain that conceived this project, and the arm that executes it! Your aim, then —"

"Our aim — and God grant it may be attained! — our aim is to exterminate them all, Holy Father, and to consecrate the greater part of their spoils to the glory of the Catholic religion."

"My son, embrace me!" said Urban V., touched to the heart, and filled with admiration for the valiant sword which was ready to do battle in behalf of the Church.

But Bertrand modestly declined so great an honor, and contented himself merely with kissing the hand of His Holiness.

"But you will not forget, Holy Father," resumed the constable, after a moment's pause, "that these soldiers whom I command, the soldiers bent upon this heroic pigrimage, are the selfsame men whom Your Holiness saw fit not long since to excommunicate."

"And I was right in doing so; and I believe, moreover, that at the time you were also of my opinion."

"Your Holiness is always right," said Bertrand, eluding the end of the sentence; "all the same, they are excommunicated, and I will not conceal from you, Holy Father, that this step will have a detestable effect upon men about to fight for the Christian religion."

"My son," said Urban, slowly emptying his glass of golden Monte Pulciano,—a wine he preferred above all others, even those grown upon the sides of the beautiful river whose waters bathe the walls of his capitol,—"my son, the Church is as I desire her to be, and, you know well, neither intolerant nor implacable. She pardons every sin, especially when the sinner's repentance is sincere; and if you, a pillar of the faith, will guarantee their return to orthodoxy—"

"Oh, certainly, I will guarantee that, Holy Father!"

"Then," responded Urban, "I will revoke the anathema pronounced upon them, and they shall feel only a portion of my anger, which is always full of indulgence, as you know well, my son," continued the pope, smiling.

Bertrand bit his lips, as he perceived that His Holiness was plunging deeper and deeper into error.

Urban continued, with the utmost suavity, but not without that firmness which sits well upon one who, though granting complete absolution, is deeply aware of the gravity of the offence he would fain forget,—

"You know, my dear son, that these men have amassed impious riches; and, as Ecclesiastes observes, 'Omne malum in pravo fenore.'"

"I do not understand Hebrew, Holy Father," responded Bertrand, with humility.

"And therefore I spoke in the simple Latin tongue,

my son," answered Urban V., with a smile; "but I forgot that warriors are not Benedictines. I will translate to you the words I have just quoted, and you will perceive how admirably they are adapted to the situation: —

"Ill-gotten wealth is the source of all evil."

"Exactly so!" thought Du Guesclin, smiling through his thick beard as he thought how this proverb was to be turned against His Holiness.

"And so I have decided," continued Urban, "for your sake, my son, and for yours only, I swear, that these miscreants, — for such they are, believe me, however repentant, — these miscreants, I repeat, shall forfeit only a tithe of their goods; in consideration whereof the ban of excommunication shall be removed. Now you observe that I am acting spontaneously, without the least urging from you; and you will make them appreciate well the favor I am conferring upon them, dear son, for it is no slight one!"

"No, it is indeed great," answered Du Guesclin, kneeling; "and I doubt whether they will appreciate it as it deserves."

"Is that so?" queried Urban. "Come, now, my son, at what price shall we fix the tithe?"

And Urban turned towards his brother, as if to interrogate him upon so grave and delicate a matter.

The latter, gently assuming the air of future pope, responded, turning upon his fauteuil, —

"Men upon whom your spiritual thunderbolts have descended, Holy Father, ought to offer much temporal gold for their removal."

"Certainly, that is true," answered Urban; "but we are gracious, and it must be said that everything invites our clemency. The skies themselves are so fair in

this land of Avignon, the air is so pure,— when the Mistral forgets to blow from the caverns of Mount Ventoux,— that all the blessings of the Lord proclaim unto mankind pardon and brotherhood. Yes," added His Holiness, extending his golden cup to a young page clothed in white, who immediately replenished it, "yes, surely all men are brothers!"

"Permit me, Holy Father," said Bertrand, "to explain in what capacity I came hither. I have come as ambassador of these brave men of whom we were speaking."

"And as such, you ask our indulgence; is it not so?"

"That first of all, of course, Holy Father. Your indulgence is always an excellent thing for us poor soldiers, who may be called upon to die at a moment's notice."

"Oh, that indulgence is yours, my son. But we were speaking of our clemency,— or our pardon, rather, if you prefer that."

"We count upon your pardon also, Holy Father."

"Yes, but you know upon what conditions we can accord it."

"Alas!" replied Du Guesclin, "the condition cannot be accepted, Sovereign Pontiff, for Your Holiness has forgotten the object of the army's departure for Spain."

"The object of its departure?"

"Yes, Holy Father. I believe I told you that its object was to fight for the Christian Church."

"Well?"

"Well, engaged in this holy mission, it should receive not only complete pardon and every indulgence from Your Holiness, but also your assistance."

"My assistance, Messire Bertrand?" asked Urban, who began to feel a certain uneasiness. "What do these words mean, my son?"

"They mean, Holy Father, that the Apostolic See is

generous, — she is rich; the propagation of the Faith will serve her interests well, and she is able to pay for that which serves her interests."

"What do I hear, Messire Bertrand?" interrupted Urban, rising from his fauteuil, and hardly able to dissimulate his anger.

"Your Holiness has understood me perfectly, I see," replied the constable, standing, and brushing the dust from his knees.

"Not at all," exclaimed the pope, who, on the contrary, was determined not to understand, "not at all; explain."

"It is thus, Holy Father: These illustrious soldiers, — somewhat scoundrelly, 't is true, but most repentant; these men whom you see here in numbers as many as the leaves of the forest or the sands of the sea, — a comparison drawn, I believe, from holy books; these renowned braves whom you see under the lead of Sir Hugh Caverley, the Green Knight, Claude the Plunderer, Le Bègue de Vilaine, Olivier de Mauny, and many other valorous knights, — expect Your Holiness to give them a subsidy for undertaking this campaign. The King of France has promised a hundred thousand gold crowns; 't is a most Christian prince who deserves to be canonized neither more nor less than a pope! Now Your Holiness, the very keystone of Christianity, is surely able to give two hundred thousand crowns, for instance."

Again Urban nearly sprang from his chair; but this elasticity of the Holy Father's muscles, which was never displayed except when under the influence of very strong nervous excitement from without, did not in the least disconcert Bertrand, whose attitude did not for a moment cease to express respect and decision.

"Messire," said His Holiness, "I perceive that one

may be contaminated by intercourse with brigands; and certain men whom I will not name, who have always enjoyed heretofore the favors of the Holy See, would have been more fitly rewarded according to their merits, it appears to me, if they had been submitted to the rigors of its discipline."

The pope expected that this terrible speech would have a tremendous effect; but, to his amazement, the constable remained unmoved.

"I have six thousand soldiers," continued His Holiness.

Bertrand remarked to himself that Urban V. lied by doubling his number, just as Caverley and the Green Knight had done; and in spite of the urgency of the situation, this seemed to him a somewhat hazardous proceeding for a pope.

"I have six thousand soldiers in Avignon, and thirty thousand inhabitants able to carry arms."

In making this statement, Urban merely added ten thousand men to his actual number. "Able to carry arms," he repeated; "the town is fortified, and even if it had neither ramparts nor moats nor pikemen, upon my brow is the tiara of Saint Peter, and by invoking God's assistance, alone I could stay these barbarians, who are no more courageous than Attila's soldiers, whom Pope Leo restrained in their attempts upon Rome."

"But reflect, Holy Father: the vicars of Christ have never succeeded, either in their spiritual or temporal warfare, when it has been directed against the kings of France, the elder sons of the Church.

"Witness your predecessor, Boniface VIII., who received — God preserve me from excusing such audacity — who received a slap in the face at Colonna, and died in prison, gnawing his hands from hunger. And you see already

how far excommunication goes, for those whom you excommunicated, instead of dispersing, have on the contrary gathered all their forces, and have come to demand pardon, sword in hand. And as far as temporal warfare is concerned, six thousand soldiers and twenty thousand unskilled citizens, — in all but twenty-six thousand men, even counting every citizen as a man, — what is this number against fifty thousand trained warriors, who fear neither God nor the devil; who are more accustomed to the sight of a pope than Attila's soldiers were, who beheld a pope for the first time? And while I mention that fact, let me implore His Holiness, above all things, not to show himself before these adventurers."

"What! would they dare?" exclaimed Urban, his eyes sparkling with anger.

"Holy Father, I know not whether they would dare, nor what they would dare; these rascals are dauntless knaves, who would stop at nothing."

"But — the Lord's Anointed! — wretched men — would they dare — would Christians?"

"But allow me to remind you, Holy Father, these are no longer Christians; they are excommunicated men. Alas! what would you expect from such! Ah, if only they had not been excommunicated, it would be quite another matter! Then they would still fear excommunication; now they fear nothing."

The more forcible the argument became, the stronger grew the pope's anger. Suddenly he rose and went towards Bertrand.

"You who offer such strange counsel as this," he said, "have you no fears for your own safety here?"

And Bertrand responded with a tranquillity that would have demoralized Saint Peter himself. "My safety in this place is better secured even than that of Your Holi-

ness; for admitting, what I do not suppose, that any mishap should occur to me, I will answer for it beforehand that there would not remain one stone above another in the good town of Avignon, nor a single stone of that magnificent palace which you have just built, solid though it is. Oh, they are mighty demolishers, these scoundrels, and they can make away with a fortress as quickly as a regular army would pull down a shed! Moreover, they would not end there: after having passed from the town to the castle, they would attack the garrison, and then the people, and there would not remain a single bone of all your thirty thousand men; and if all these souls should be lost, it would be the fault of Your Holiness. Therefore, knowing that Your Holiness is prudent, I know that I am even safer here than I should be in my own camp."

"Very well," exclaimed the pope, furiously, champing the bit with which the constable had curbed him, "very well; I shall persist in what I have said, and await the consequences."

"Indeed, Holy Father," said Bertrand, "I swear to you, by the faith of a simple gentleman, I do not recognize Your Holiness in this refusal. I was convinced, but mistakenly, I see now, that Your Holiness would make a sacrifice even greater than the Faith demanded of him, and that, following the example of good King Charles, the Apostolic See would offer two hundred thousand crowns! Believe me, Holy Father," added the constable, assuming a deeply-pained expression, "it grieves a good Christian like myself to find that the first prince in Christendom refuses his aid to so pious an enterprise as that we are undertaking. Never, never will the worthy leaders believe it!" And saluting Urban V. with deeper humility than ever, he left the latter stupefied with the unexpected

events he had been compelled to face, retreated almost backwards to the terrace, descended the staircase, and at the palace gate, finding himself once more face to face with his suite, who had begun to be uneasy on his account, he returned to the camp.

XXII.

HOW MONSEIGNEUR, THE POPE'S LEGATE, VISITED THE CAMP OF THE ADVENTURERS, AND HOW HE WAS RECEIVED THERE.

Du Guesclin, after his return to the camp, began to realize that he would have some difficulty in putting into execution the fine scheme he had conceived; but if successful, it would achieve three great results: it would pay the adventurers, defray the expenses of the campaign, and aid the king to complete Hôtel Saint Paul. But the pope did not seem likely to change the view he had just expressed.

The Church is stubborn. Charles V. was a scrupulous king. It would never do to displease his royal master under the pretext of pleasing him, nor at the beginning of a campaign to give occasion for superstitions that would not fail to attribute the first reverses the army might meet with to the irreligious condition of its general, and the prayers of the sovereign pontiff for vengeance.

But Du Guesclin was a Breton; that is to say, he was more stubborn than all the popes that have ever lived, or ever will. Moreover, in justification of his obstinacy, necessity pleaded, that inexorable goddess whom antiquity has represented holding an iron wedge in her hand.

He decided not to abandon his plan at once, but to take counsel of circumstances, and to carry out his scheme or to delay its execution as future events should dictate.

Consequently, at his orders, his men were drawn up in warlike array, his chariots summoned, his Bretons — who had arrived two days before, under the conduct of Olivier de Mauny and Le Bègue de Vilaine — directed their steps towards Villeneuve; and so formidable was the display that from the highest part of his terrace — which he had not left — His Holiness saw a long bluish line unwinding like an azure serpent, and beneath the setting sun its spirals flashed in divers places reflections that were ruddier than gold and more sinister than the lightnings of the papal anathema.

Urban V. was not only an excellent monk but a good general as well, and he did not have to summon his officer-in-chief to learn that this serpent need only advance a step, and it would hold Avignon within its coils.

"Ha, ha!" he said to his legate, his glance following this manœuvre uneasily, "their insolence increases, it seems to me."

And wishing to discover whether the Free Companies and their leaders were as incensed as Du Guesclin had said, the pope, with no other thought than that of sounding the general disposition towards him, despatched his legate unto the general-in-chief.

The legate had not been present at the conversation which had taken place between him and Du Guesclin, consequently did not know that the latter had asked for anything more than a softening of the sentence of excommunication which had been pronounced against the Free Companies, — an ignorance which gave him the conviction that he had only to bestow some indulgences and benedictions, and his duty would be discharged.

And he set out, mounted upon his mule, and accompanied by a pale sacristan, his acolyte.

As we have said, the legate had received no warning. The pope had considered that to communicate his apprehensions to an ambassador would only diminish the confidence the latter ought to entertain for the power of his master; and so we see the legate advancing, radiant and superb in bearing, on his way from the town to the camp, rejoicing in the mere anticipation of the genuflections and signs of the cross which his entry would occasion!

But Du Guesclin, in his character of professional diplomat, had placed the English on guard at the entrance of the camp, — men not over-zealous for the interests of the pope, with whom, for more than a hundred years, they had had frequent discussions; and, as an extra precaution, he talked with them, that their subsequent opinion might be in entire accordance with his views.

"Guard your post well, my comrades," he said, on his return to the camp. "It is barely possible that His Holiness may send us a few detachments of his soldiers. I have had a slight difference with him on account of a certain consideration, which, in my opinion, he owed us in amends for that famous excommunication pronounced upon us. I say 'upon *us*,' for from the moment when you became my soldiers, I regarded myself as excommunicated also, and devoted to everlasting flames as much as yourselves. Now His Holiness — 't is incredible, on the faith of a constable! — His Holiness refuses us that consideration."

At this unexpected peroration, the English quivered like mastiffs whom their master has attempted to enrage, by way of amusement.

"Oh, indeed!" they said. "Let the pope rub against us, and he will soon find that he has excommunicated men to deal with!"

Du Guesclin judged, after this reply, that they had been sufficiently instructed, and proceeded to the camp where the French forces were located.

"My friends," he said, "it is possible that you may see an envoy from the pope to-day. The sovereign pontiff — can you believe it? — the sovereign pontiff, upon whom we bestowed Avignon and all the country around, has refused me the assistance which I requested in behalf of our good King Charles; and I must confess to you, although perhaps your judgment will disapprove, that we have just had a little quarrel. In this dispute — which perhaps I ought not to have raised, but I will leave that to your consciences — the sovereign pontiff was so indiscreet as to say to me that if spiritual arms were not sufficient, he might have recourse to temporal arms. You see that I have not yet recovered from my vexation!"

Frenchmen of the fourteenth century did not entertain a very high opinion of the pope's soldiery, and so the hearers of Du Guesclin's little discourse responded by loud bursts of laughter.

"Good!" thought the constable. "They hoot at him; and hooting is anything but pleasing music. And now for my Bretons! That will not be such an easy matter!"

For the Bretons, and especially the Bretons of those times, possessed a degree of religious zeal amounting almost to asceticism, and they might fear to embroil themselves with the sovereign pontiff.

And Du Guesclin, to predispose them in his favor, entered their presence, his face quite dejected. His soldiers adored him, not merely as a compatriot, but as their father; for there was not a single one of them but knew the constable personally, and had received some

service at his hands, and many among them he had saved from captivity, from misfortune, even from death.

At sight of this face, which expressed the deepest consternation, the children of ancient Armorica pressed to their hero's side.

"Oh, my children," exclaimed Du Guesclin, "I am in despair! Will you believe it? The pope not only persists in excommunicating the Free Companies, but also extends excommunication to those who desire to aid them in avenging the death of our good King Charles's sister. And so, although we are worthy and loyal Christians, we must be outlawed, numbered with miscreants, dogs, wolves! The whole world is free to hunt us down! Upon my soul, the sovereign pontiff has gone mad!"

Prolonged murmurs were heard among the Bretons.

"It certainly must be said," continued Bertrand Du Guesclin, "that he is ill-advised. But by whom? I do not know; but I do know that his Italian knights menace our safety, and at this very moment he is busied — how? — You will scarcely believe it! He is heaping indulgences upon them, that they may be readier to attack us."

The Bretons began to roar like wild beasts.

"Now what did I ask of our Holy Father? Only the right of receiving Catholic communion and Christian burial! Surely 't is the least thing men can ask who are about to combat with infidels. Now, my children, this is how it stands.

"I am done with him. I don't know what you think of the matter. But though I believe I am as good a Christian as lives, I swear that if our Holy Father, Urban V., wants to play terrestrial king with us, very

well! that 's one thing! but we are not going to risk our lives in defence of his popelings! " [1]

The Bretons sprang to their feet at these words, and so great was their fury that Du Guesclin was obliged to calm them.

It was at this very moment that the legate, passing through the gate of Soulle, and crossing the Bénézet Bridge, came to the outer enclosures of the camp. His face wore a beatific smile.

The English ran to the palisades to see him, and, crossing their arms phlegmatically, they cried insolently, " Ho, ho! what does that mule want with us? "

The sacristan paled with anger at this insult; but assuming the paternal tone familiar to members of the Church, observed, —

" This is the pope's legate."

" Money, money! " cried the English, unanimously.

The legate, astounded at this request, the last one he expected, looked at the sacristan, who crossed himself in terror. And they continued their way through the ranks, whilst the soldiers cried, without ceasing, " Give us money, money! "

Not a leader was to be seen; warned in advance by Du Guesclin, each had retired to his tent.

The two ambassadors had crossed the first line, which, as we have said, consisted of the English, and had now reached the French line, which, at sight of the legate, rushed upon him.

The legate, thinking they desired to do him honor, reassumed a lofty bearing, when, instead of the humble salutations he expected, he was startled with loud bursts of laughter upon every side.

" Eh, now! Good-morrow, sir legate! " cried the

[1] *Papelins:* the pope's soldiery received this name.

soldiers, as fond of a jest in the fourteenth century as to-day. "And did His Holiness send you hither as a fair sample of his cavalry?"

"And is it with this ambassador His Holiness thinks to terrify us? If we are to feel the edge of his sword, can he send us nothing better than the jawbone of an ass?"

And belaboring the ambassador's beast with switches, mocking, roaring with laughter, they pursued the legate with a persistency and amid an uproar that pained him even more than the pecuniary demands of the English. The latter had not yet abandoned him, and many continued to follow, crying, with the full strength of their lungs, and in their native tongue, —

"Money, money!"

Or, as we say in French, "De l'argent, de l'argent!"

And as speedily as possible the legate passed through the second line. And now the turn of the Bretons had come; but they were less inclined for pleasantries than the others. They approached the legate, their eyes flashing, their fists clinched, crying, in a terrible voice, —

"Absolution, absolution!"

After a quarter of an hour the legate's ears could no longer distinguish clearly anything that was said, so varied were the cries; and thus this terrible tumult continued, and sounds were heard like the roaring of angry waves, the rolling of thunder mingled with the whistling of the north wind, or the grinding of pebbles washed back and forth with the tide.

The sacristan began to lose his confidence, and to tremble in every limb. Beads of perspiration poured from the legate's brow, and his teeth chattered.

Then the legate, growing paler and paler, and finding

that his mule, upon whose back more than one sportive Frenchman had sprung, was scarcely able to bear him much further, he asked timidly, —

"The leaders, messieurs, the leaders, — will some one among you have the kindness to conduct me to them?"

And not till then did Du Guesclin, hearing this pathetic voice, think that the time had come to interfere. His robust shoulders shoved a passage through the vast crowd, which gave way before him, as the grasses of the savannas or the reeds of the Pontine marshes sway before the tread of the buffalo.

"Ah, it is you, monsieur, the papal legate! an envoy from our Holy Father; *Jarni Dieu!* what an honor for excommunicated men! Back, soldiers, back! Ah, Monsieur le Légat, be so good as to enter my tent! Messieurs," he exclaimed, with some attempt at anger, "respect the papal legate, I beg of you. Doubtless he brings us a favorable reply from His Holiness! Monsieur, will you accept my hand, and permit me to aid you in descending from your mule? There! have you dismounted? Then we will proceed."

And, indeed, the legate did not have to be asked twice. He seized the robust hand which the Breton knight extended to him, sprang to the ground, and passed through the crowd of soldiery, representing three nations, that had gathered to see him; the contortions of their shoulders, their pomposity, their roars, and their comments made the sacristan's hair stand upon end, even though he had not received the gift of tongues, for the rascals supplemented their words with expressive gestures.

"What society!" murmured the church-rat; "what society!"

Once within his tent, Bertrand bestowed deep rever-

ences upon the legate, and apologized for his soldiers in language which restored, somewhat, the unhappy ambassador's courage. Then the legate, perceiving that no immediate danger threatened him, as his safeguard was the constable's honor, regained his former dignity, and began a harangue, whose meaning was —

That the pope might grant the rebels absolution, but had no money for any one.

The others, who, according to Du Guesclin's advice, approached the tent, had entered, one after another; they heard this response, and they did not attempt to conceal from the legate that they were but indifferently pleased with it.

"Then, Monsieur le Légat," said Du Guesclin, "I fear we shall never make honest men of our soldiers."

The legate responded, "But His Holiness is deeply moved to think that an utterance of his has sent so many souls to eternal damnation; and as there may be some among them who are less culpable than others, and many, perhaps, who sincerely repent, His Holiness will perform a miracle in your behalf, — a miracle of goodness and clemency!"

"Indeed!" said the leaders; "and what is it? Let us see what this miracle is!"

"His Holiness will perform the miracle you so much desire," answered the legate.

"And what else?" asked Bertrand.

"What else?" repeated the legate, who had not heard His Holiness speak of anything further; "I believe that is all."

"But it is not," replied Bertrand. "No, indeed, that is not all; there is a question of money."

"The pope did not speak to me of that; I know nothing whatever about it," said the legate.

"I thought that the English had stated the matter to you in a single word. I heard them calling, 'Money, money!'"

"The Holy Father has no money. His coffers are empty."

Du Guesclin turned towards the leaders as if to inquire of them whether they were content with this answer.

The leaders shrugged their shoulders pityingly.

"What do these gentlemen say?" asked the legate, uneasily.

"They say that the Holy Father has only to do what they do."

"What? when?"

"When their coffers are empty."

"And what do they do?"

"They replenish them."

And Du Guesclin rose.

The legate understood that the audience was ended. The bronzed cheeks of the constable reddened slightly.

The legate straddled his mule, and prepared to return to Avignon, in the company of his sacristan, who was more terrified than ever.

"Wait, wait, monseigneur," said Du Guesclin; "you must not depart like that, without company, for you might be cut to pieces on the way. *Jarni Dieu!* that would annoy me."

The legate gave a start, which proved that whether Du Guesclin had doubted his words or not, he believed Du Guesclin's.

And the constable, walking beside the mule which the sacristan led by the bridle, conducted the legate to the extremity of the camp in silence; but they were accompanied by such eloquent hissings, such an awful

clashing of arms, and imprecations so full of menace, that though his departure was protected by the constable, it seemed to the poor legate more terrible even than his arrival.

Once outside the camp, the legate spurred on his mule, as if he feared that some one wished to overtake him.

XXIII.

HOW HIS HOLINESS, POPE URBAN V., FINALLY DECIDED TO PAY THE EXPENSES OF THE CRUSADE, AND BLESS THE CRUSADERS.

THE unfortunate fugitive had scarcely re-entered Avignon, when Du Guesclin, marching his troops forward, succeeded in forming that terrible circle which had so much alarmed Urban V. when he had first seen it from the terrace above. By this move, Villeneuve-la-Begude and Gervasy were taken, without resistance, although there was a garrison of five or six thousand men at Villeneuve.

The constable had intrusted this operation to Caverley, who was also to station his forces in both towns; for Du Guesclin was familiar with the habits of the captain and his men in lodging themselves on the enemy's ground, and he was quite sure of the impression which would be created among the good people of Avignon, at this first attempt to occupy the country.

And the self-same evening, from the top of their walls, the townsmen of Avignon saw immense fires burning; some had been kindled with difficulty, but, once started, it was wonderful to see how brightly they burned.

Looking about them, the people recognized by degrees the places where the flames were leaping; they perceived that their own houses were making the blaze and their olive-trees furnished the matches.

Meanwhile the English were exchanging the wines of Châlon of Thorins, and Beaune, which they relished highly (what remained of them!), for those of Rivesalte,

L'Hermitage, and Saint-Perray, which they considered warmer and sweeter.

By the blaze which these fires furnished, a light which encircled the town and by which he could see the English making preparations for the night, the pope assembled his council.

The cardinals differed among themselves, for it was their custom to do so; and in this case there was additional reason. Some were for measures even severer than any that had been before adopted, for striking a blow which would inspire wholesome terror not merely in the adventurers but throughout France.

But monseigneur, the pope's legate, whose ears were still ringing with the various cries of the excommunicated army, did not attempt to conceal from His Holiness and the council the impression he had received.

In the pope's kitchen the sacristan was also relating the story of the dangers he had encountered in company with Monseigneur le Légat, and from which they could not have escaped at last, had it not been for their heroic bearing, which had overawed English and Frenchmen and Bretons.

And while the scullion applauded the chorister's courage, the cardinals were listening to the tale of the legate.

"I am ready to offer up my life in our Holy Father's service," he was saying, "for I declare that it almost came to that; never has my life been in greater danger than during our embassy to the camp. And I also affirm that nothing less than an absolute order from His Holiness would take me back to that camp. If it is his will to send me to martyrdom, I would joyfully meet a martyr's death, if only I believed, but I do not, that through my death the Faith would receive new courage. Except under positive orders, I will not return to those

infuriated men, without bringing them all they demand."

"We shall see, we shall see," said the pope, deeply moved and very uneasy.

"But we see already, Your Holiness, and very plainly," said one of the cardinals.

"What is it that you see?" asked Urban.

"Houses in flames, half a score at least; and among them I can distinguish my own perfectly. And look, Holy Father! this very moment the roof has fallen in."

"Yes," responded Urban; "something must be done without delay, it seems to me."

"I agree with you, Holy Father! For in my cellars is the vintage of six years, and those villains, they say, do not allow themselves long enough to tap a cask, but stave it in to drink their own healths."

"It is my opinion," said a third, to whose residence the flames were coming nearer and nearer, — "it is my opinion that an ambassador should be despatched at once to the constable, imploring him in the name of the Church to stop the ravages which his men are committing upon our property."

"Would you be willing to undertake this mission, my son?" asked the pope.

"I would do so with great pleasure, Your Holiness, but I am a poor orator, and besides the constable does not know me. It would be better, I think, to send some one whose face is familiar to him."

The pope turned towards the legate.

"I ask time enough to repeat my *In Manus*," answered the latter.

"'T is right you should have it," said the pope.

"But make haste!" exclaimed the cardinal, whose house was beginning to burn.

The legate rose, made the sign of the cross, and said, "I am ready to go to martyrdom."

"Receive my blessing!" answered the pope.

"But what shall I say to them?"

"You may tell them that if they will put out the fires they have kindled, my wrath shall be extinguished; if they will cease burning, my curses also shall cease."

The legate shook his head, with the air of a man who is very doubtful as to the result of his mission; but, none the less, he sent for his sacristan, who had scarcely completed the narration of his Iliad, when, to his great terror, he was compelled to set out upon his Odyssey.

Both departed, mounted as before.

The pope had desired to give them an escort of *papelins*, but the latter had positively refused, answering that they were employed to knit stockings and mount guard, and not to mingle with excommunicated men.

And so the legate was compelled to set out without them; and indeed he preferred it should be so, for, with no one but his sacristan, he might count upon his very weakness to protect him.

This time, in approaching the camp, the legate's face brightened. He had plucked a young olive-tree, roots and all, and waved it before him as a symbol of peace; seeing the English at a distance, he cried out, —

"Good tidings, good tidings!"

The English, who did not understand what he said, knew what the gesture meant, and received him not so badly; the French, who comprehended perfectly, waited; the Bretons, who did not understand quite so well, bowed as he passed.

This time the legate's return to the camp was more in the nature of a triumphal entry than it had been on the previous occasion; and a peace-maker, overflowing with

charity towards all, might be pardoned if he mistook those incendiary fires for the flames that joy had kindled.

But when he was compelled to announce to Du Guesclin that he had returned, bringing with him no more than upon his previous journey, in other words, pardon, there were tears in the poor ambassador's eyes, as he accomplished his errand.

And they flowed the more freely as Du Guesclin gazed at him with an expression that seemed to say, —

"And you dared to return here with no other offer but that?"

And without further hesitation, the legate exclaimed, —

"Save my life, Monsieur le Constable, save my life; for as sure as death, when your soldiers know that I have returned with empty hands, after proclaiming 'good tidings,' they will kill me."

"Humph!" said Du Guesclin; "I cannot say that they will not, monseigneur."

"Alas, alas!" groaned the legate. "I assured His Holiness that he was sending me to martyrdom."

"I will admit," said the constable, "that these soldiers have ceased to be men; they are wolves. Their excommunication has had an effect upon them that amazes even myself. Their hides are thinner than I thought; and, in truth, if each one of them has not received between now and to-morrow three gold crowns apiece to soothe the smart that the anathema has left, I will answer for nothing. To-morrow they will be capable of burning all Avignon, and with Avignon — it horrifies myself! — they will burn the cardinals as well, and with the cardinals, His Holiness. I shudder to think of it!"

"But as concerns myself, monsieur, you understand that I must bear this answer to them, that they may

come to some decision which will prevent such awful calamities; and in order that they should know your answer, and reach some decision, it is necessary that I return to them safe and sound."

"You might reach them a little the worse for being handled," said the constable, "but, in my opinion, the results would be all the greater. However, we do not desire to constrain His Holiness by acts of violence. We desire that his decision should be the expression of his own will, the result of free arbitration. I myself will reconduct you through the camp as before, and that you may be securer you shall pass out through a hidden gate."

"Ah, sir constable!" answered the legate, "that is most kind of you; you are indeed a Christian!"

The constable kept his word. The legate left the camp safe and sound; but the pillage, which had been for a moment interrupted by the message of good tidings he had borne, began again with more fury than ever.

It was quite natural, for disappointment adds fuel to indignation. The wines were drunken, household belongings carried away, and the foragers littered the place with their spoils.

The people of the town, from the top of their walls, saw that they were being ruined, their homes rifled from attic to cellar, but the bravest of them dared not leave the town.

The cardinals lamented among themselves.

Then the pope made an offer of one hundred thousand crowns.

"First bring them, and then we shall see," answered Du Guesclin.

The pope assembled his council, and with the profoundest sorrow stamped upon his features, he said,—

"My children, the sacrifice must be made!"

"Yes," said the cardinals, unanimously; "for, as Ezekiel says, 'The enemy inhabiteth our lands; with fire and sword he hath laid waste our cities; he hath ravished our wives and our daughters.'"

"We will offer a sacrifice," said Urban V.

And the treasurer held himself in readiness to visit the pope's coffers.

"They ask one hundred thousand crowns," said the pope.

"It must be given to them," answered the cardinals.

"Alas, yes!" responded His Holiness.

And raising his eyes to heaven, he sighed profoundly, and then called, —

"Angelo!"

The treasurer bowed.

"Angelo," continued the pope, "proclaim unto the inhabitants of the city that I must levy a contribution of one hundred thousand crowns; it need not be stated at first whether of gold or silver; that will be explained later, when I levy the contribution from these poor people."

"To levy a contribution" was not perhaps a French custom, but it seemed to be very common among the Romans, for the pontifical treasurer made no comment upon it.

"If they complain," continued the pope, "tell them how you yourself can bear witness that the united prayers of my cardinals and myself were not sufficient to save my dearly-beloved people from this necessity, so painful to my heart."

Cardinals and treasurer regarded the pope with admiration.

"And indeed these poor people are very fortunate in being able to save their houses and their property at so low a price. Yet it is sad," he added, tears in his eyes. "Verily, verily, nothing is sadder for a prince than to be

compelled to give away in this fashion the money of his subjects!"

"Which might have been so useful to Your Holiness upon some future occasion," said the treasurer, bowing.

"But God wills it so," said the pope.

And the contribution was levied, with many murmurs when silver was asked for, and not a little resistance when it was demanded in gold.

Then His Holiness had recourse to his *papelins;* and as they no longer had excommunicates but good Christians to deal with, they dropped their knitting-needles, and seized their pikes with such a martial air that the people of Avignon were quite ready to return to obedience.

At break of day the legate took his way towards the camp of the excommunicated men, but this time, instead of a mule, he brought ten richly caparisoned horses.

At this sight, the soldiers began to yell with joy, which made a still less favorable impression upon the legate than the unpleasant one he had previously received.

But instead of finding Bertrand charmed, as he had expected, with this striking and tangible proof of the Holy See's submission, what was his surprise to find him in the worst of humors, turning over and over a piece of parchment whose seal had just been broken.

"How is this?" said the constable, shaking his head; "this is fine money you have brought me, monseigneur!"

"That is so," said the ambassador, in whose opinion money was always money, and always good.

"Yes," said Du Guesclin, "but I have my doubts about taking it; whom did it come from, — this money?"

"Why, from His Holiness of course, since His Holiness has sent it to you."

"Excellent reasoning! but who furnished it?"

"*Dame!* His Holiness, I presume."

"Pardon my frankness, Monsieur le Légat," said Du Guesclin; "but a son of the Church ought not to lie."

"But I can bear witness," began the legate.

Du Guesclin interrupted him. "Read this," he said, and presented him with the parchment which his fingers had been rolling and unrolling.

The legate took the parchment and read: —

"Is it the wish of the noble Du Guesclin that an innocent city, already groaning under the oppression of its prince; that poor peasants, half ruined already, and artisans dying of hunger, should deprive themselves of their last mouthful of bread to pay for a war of caprice? Of the most loyal of Christian knights this question is asked, in the name of humanity, by the good city of Avignon; with its sweat and its blood, it has toiled for this hundred thousand crowns, wrested from it, while His Holiness hides in the vaults of his castle six million crowns, besides all the treasures of Rome."

"Now, then!" demanded Bertrand, angrily, when the legate had finished reading, "what do you say to that?"

"Alas," replied the legate, "His Holiness has been betrayed."

"Then what is said concerning these concealed riches is true?"

"Merely an assertion."

"Now, monseigneur," said the constable, "take back this gold! Men who are about to battle for God's cause do not need the bread of the poor, but the superfluity of the rich. And hearken well the words of the Knight Bertrand Du Guesclin, constable of France. 'If two hundred thousand gold crowns of the pope and his cardinals are not here before this evening, this very night I will burn, not only the suburbs and the city, but the palace also, and with the palace the cardinals, with the

cardinals the pope; and of pope and cardinals and palace to-morrow no vestige shall remain.'

"Go, monseigneur!"

These noble words were received by the soldiers, officers, and leaders with loud salvoes of applause, which left the legate no reason for doubting the unanimity of their opinion; preserving complete silence in the midst of these acclamations, he returned upon the Avignon road, with his horses laden with treasure.

"Children," said the constable to the soldiers at a distance, who had heard nothing, and were surprised at the acclamations of their comrades, "these poor people had only one hundred thousand crowns to give us; it is too little, for it is no more than the sum I promised to your leaders; the pope shall give us two hundred thousand crowns."

And three hours later twenty horses bent beneath their burden, crossed the enclosure of the camp to go forth no more; and the legate, having arranged the money in three piles, one composed of one hundred thousand gold crowns, the other two of fifty thousand each, added the pontifical blessing, to which the adventurers, good-natured devils when they got their own way, responded by wishing him every sort of prosperity.

When the legate had departed, Du Guesclin said to Caverley, Claude the Plunderer, and the Green Knight,—

"Now we will settle our accounts."

"Yes, we will," said the adventurers.

"I owe you fifty thousand gold crowns, a crown for each soldier. Was not that our agreement?"

"It was."

Bertrand attacked the larger pile first.

"Here they are!"

The adventurers counted after Du Guesclin, following

that maxim which was a popular one even in the fourteenth century: —

"It is worth while to count your money twice."

"Good!" they said; "so much for the soldiers. Now for the officers."

Bertrand drew twenty thousand crowns from the same heap as before.

"Four thousand officers," said he, "and five crowns for each: twenty thousand crowns. Is that the amount?"

The leaders proceeded to pile up the pieces.

"That is right," they said, after a few moments.

"Good!" said Du Guesclin; "and now for the leaders."

"Yes, now for the leaders," repeated Caverley, licking his lips, so enticing was the prospect.

"Now, let us see," said Bertrand; "ten leaders at three thousand crowns apiece, — is that it?"

"That was the sum agreed upon."

"Here they are," said Du Guesclin, and he pointed to all that remained of the hundred thousand gold crowns.

"That is it exactly," answered the adventurers; "none can dispute it."

"So, then, there can be no further objection to undertaking the campaign?"

"None whatever, and we are ready," said Caverley, "always provided we are not asked to break our oath of allegiance to the Prince of Wales."

"Of course," answered Du Guesclin; "but that oath includes only his English subjects."

"Certainly!" replied the captain.

"Agreed, then."

"Very well, we are satisfied. But how about —"

"About what?" demanded Du Guesclin.

"How about that other hundred thousand crowns?"

"Captains like yourselves are too far sighted to suppose that an army can undertake a campaign with nothing to fall back upon."

"Of course," answered Caverley.

"Very well! fifty thousand crowns of this money is destined to fill our common coffers."

"Ha, ha!" said Caverley; "and the other fifty thousand for our private coffers."

"*Peste*, but this is a clever head!"

"Come hither, messire!" added Du Guesclin to his chaplain. "Together we will compose a short letter to our good seigneur, the King of France, advising him that the fifty thousand crowns which remain are at his disposal."

"Hum!" observed Caverley, "that is all very fine, but I would n't do it, not I! No, not for the Prince of Wales himself!"

XXIV.

HOW MESSIRE HUGUES DE CAVERLY FAILED TO OBTAIN THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND GOLD CROWNS.

It will be remembered that after the scene in the garden, we left Aïssa re-entering her father's house, whilst Agénor had disappeared on the other side of the wall.

Musaron understood that nothing could detain his master any longer at Bordeaux, and as soon as the young man roused himself from the reverie in which he had been plunged after the events which had occurred, he found his horse saddled, and his squire ready to set out.

Agénor sprang to the saddle and, spurring his horse, left the town at a gallop, followed by Musaron, jesting as usual.

"Why, now, monseigneur," he said, "we are running away very fast, it seems to me. Where the devil have you hidden that treasure you were going to fetch from the infidel?"

Agénor shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply.

"Do not kill your good horse, monseigneur; we shall need him during the campaign, and he cannot go very long at that rate, I warn you, especially if, like Prince Henry, you have stitched fifty gold pieces or more in the lining of your saddle."

"That is so," said Agénor, "you are right; fifty gold marks or fifty iron marks are too much for one beast."

And his steel-spiked lance descended irreverently upon his squire's shoulders.

Musaron bent beneath the burden, and, as Agénor had foreseen, his gayety was considerably diminished by this excess of weight.

And so they continued their journey, and passed through Guyenne and Béarn, following each trace of the prince, but unable to find him; then they crossed the Pyrenees, and entered Spain by way of Aragon.

It was in this province that they overtook the prince, whose whereabouts they discovered by means of the gleaming flames of a small town, set on fire by Captain Hugues de Caverley.

For thus the Companies announced their arrival in Spain. Messire Hugues, a lover of the picturesque, had chosen a town upon an eminence, that it might be a beacon for all, and for ten leagues the flames lighted up this country, which he had not as yet explored, and desired to become better acquainted with.

Henry was not at all surprised at this idiosyncrasy of the English captain. He knew these leaders of old, and their fashion of doing things. But he besought Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin to interpose and exercise his authority over those immediately under his orders, that they might work as little destruction as possible.

"For this kingdom," he judiciously observed, "should belong to me some day, and I would rather receive it in good condition, and not quite ruined."

"Very well! so be it, monseigneur," said Caverley, "but on one condition."

"And that?" asked Henry.

"Your Highness will pay us a fee for every house left standing, and for every woman violated."

"I do not understand," said the prince, controlling the repugnance he felt at accepting the co-operation of such bandits.

"Why, nothing could be plainer!" replied Caverley; "if your cities are spared, and your population doubled, that ought to be worth something."

"Well, we will talk of that to-morrow," said Henry, endeavoring to smile; "meanwhile —"

"Meanwhile Aragon may sleep in peace. I will look after it all night, and, God be praised! Hugues de Caverley has not the reputation of a prodigal."

At this promise, which might be depended upon, strange as it was, Henry and Mauléon withdrew to the prince's tent, and the constable retired to his own.

But Messire Hugues de Caverley, instead of sleeping, as might have been expected after the fatigue of the day, listened to the sound of retreating footsteps till they were lost in space, and when their owners had disappeared completely from sight, he rose stealthily, and called his secretary.

This secretary was a very important person in the brave captain's establishment; for, whether because Caverley was unable to write, which is probable, or perhaps because he considered it beneath his dignity to hold a pen, the chief duty of the worthy scribe was to draw up all the transactions which took place between the leader of the adventurers and the prisoners from whom he obtained ransom. Now scarcely a day passed, when Messire Hugues de Caverley's secretary did not have some transaction of this sort to record.

The scribe presented himself, his quill in one hand, his inkhorn in the other, a roll of parchment under one arm.

"Come here, Master Robert," said the captain, "and write me a receipt and a passport."

"For what sum is the receipt?" asked the secretary.

"You may leave a blank for that; but do not be sparing of space, for the sum will be a large one."

"Whose name shall I write?" asked the scribe again.

"Leave a blank for that too."

"And much space?"

"Yes; for the name will be followed by not a few titles."

"Good, good, good!" said Master Robert, proceeding to his task with an alacrity which seemed to indicate that he was paid pro rata for the receipt. "But where is the prisoner?"

"We are ready to take him."

The scribe knew his patron's ways, and he made no needless delay in preparing the document; for, when the captain said that he was ready to take a prisoner, the prisoner was his.

This view of it was not too flattering to the captain, for scarcely had the scribe put the finishing touch to the paper, when a sound was heard in the direction of the mountain, announcing that some one was approaching. Caverley did not hear this sound apparently, and yet must have guessed at something; for, before the noise had reached even the sentinel's vigilant ear, the captain raised the hanging of his tent.

"Who goes there?" cried the sentinel.

"Friends," responded the familiar voice of Caverley's lieutenant.

"Yes, yes, friends indeed," said the adventurer, rubbing his hands; "let them pass, and raise your pike as they pass, for those whom I await are well worth the honor."

And just then, by the last gleams of the fire, which was almost out, a little band of prisoners were seen advancing, surrounded by twenty-five or thirty companions. The group was composed of a knight in the very prime of life, a Moor, who never for a moment

left a large litter that travelled at his side, and two squires.

As soon as Caverley had observed that the group really consisted of the figures we have just described, he dismissed from his tent all who were present, except his secretary.

They went out with regrets they did not even attempt to conceal, busy with calculations as to the value of the prize which had just fallen into the clutch of the human vulture they acknowledged as leader.

At sight of the four personages who had entered his tent, Caverley bowed deeply, and, addressing the knight, he said,—

"Sir king, if perchance my men have been lacking in courtesy towards Your Highness, you will pardon them; they did not know who you were."

"'Sir king!'" repeated the prisoner, endeavoring to give his voice an intonation of surprise, while his pallor betrayed the uneasiness he felt; "did you address those words to me, captain?"

"To you, sire, you, Don Pedro, the redoubtable King of Castile and Murcia."

The knight's pallor changed to a livid hue. A desperate attempt at a smile contorted his lips.

"Indeed, captain," he said, "I am sorry for you; for you are greatly mistaken if you take me to be that one you have just mentioned."

"My faith! monseigneur, I take you to be what you are, and I believe that I have captured no mean prize."

"Believe what you choose," said the knight, making a movement as if he would seat himself; "I do not think it will be very difficult to change your opinion."

"If I am to change it, monseigneur, do not be so imprudent as to walk."

The knight clinched his hands.

"And why not?" he asked.

"Because your bones crack at every step you take; they make charming music for the poor leader of a company of adventurers to whom Providence has sent this glorious windfall, — a king within his nets."

"And may not a man's bones make that sound when he walks unless he is the King Don Pedro? might no other man suffer from the same infirmity?"

"Why, it might be possible!" said Caverley, "and you perplex me; however, there's a sure way of learning whether I am mistaken as you say."

"What is that?" asked the knight, frowning and evidently wearied with this interview.

"Prince Henry of Trastamare is not a hundred steps away; he shall be sent for, and then we shall see whether he will recognize his beloved brother."

A sudden movement of the knight revealed the anger which he could not conceal.

"Ah, you color!" exclaimed Caverley; "own who you are; and if you do, by the faith of a captain, it will go no farther, and your brother shall not even know that I had the honor of a moment's conversation with Your Highness."

"Come, now; what is it that you want?"

"I want nothing, you know, until I am certain of the identity of the person who has just fallen into my hands."

"Suppose for a moment I am the king, and speak out."

"*Peste*, how you talk, sire! Speak out? Do you think my business with you can be despatched in a few words? No, monseigneur; first of all you must be guarded in a manner worthy of Your Majesty."

"Guarded! Do you think to keep me a prisoner here?"

"That is at least my intention."

"And I tell you I will not remain here an hour longer, were it to cost me half my kingdom."

"And it will cost you all of that, sire, and that is not too much, for, as you are situated, you are very likely to lose everything."

"Set your price then," exclaimed the prisoner.

"I must have time to reflect, my king," said Caverley, coldly.

Don Pedro appeared to have all he could do to control himself; without a word in answer, he seated himself near the entrance to the tent, turning his back upon Caverley.

The latter appeared to reflect deeply, and after a moment's silence he said, —

"You would give me a half-million gold crowns, would n't you?"

"You have taken leave of your senses," replied the king. "That amount could not be found in all the Spanish dominion."

"Then three hundred thousand crowns, eh? I hope I am reasonable."

"Not even half of that amount," answered the king.

"Then, monseigneur, I will send a line to your brother, Henry of Trastamare; he knows more about royal ransoms than I do, and he shall set the price of yours."

Don Pedro twisted his fingers; and drops of perspiration broke out at the roots of his hair, and rolled down his cheeks.

Caverley turned to his secretary.

"Master Robert," he said, "invite the prince Don

Henry of Trastamare hither, in my name; ask him to join me in my tent."

The scribe turned towards the threshold of the tent, and as he was about to cross it, Don Pedro rose.

"I will give the three hundred thousand gold crowns," said he.

Caverley jumped for joy.

"But after leaving you I may perhaps fall into the hands of another bandit like yourself, who will demand the price of a second ransom. You must give me a receipt and a passport."

"And you must show me the three hundred thousand crowns."

"I cannot; you know that one does not carry such a sum about his person; but have you among your men some Jew perhaps who knows the value of diamonds?"

"I know something about them myself, sire," said Caverley.

"Very well. Come hither, Mothril," said the king, motioning the Moor to approach. "You have heard?"

"Yes, sire," answered Mothril, drawing from his capacious trousers a long purse, through whose meshes flashed the wondrous lights which the king of gems has borrowed from the king of stars.

"Prepare the receipt," said Don Pedro.

"It is all ready," said the captain. "Nothing remains but to fill out the amount."

"And the passport?"

"Below, and all signed. A servant of Your Highness like myself would not keep him waiting!"

A convulsive smile passed over the king's lips.

Then approaching the table, he read these words: —

"Signed: Hughes de Caverley, leader of the English adventurers."

The king read not another word. A glance like a flash of lightning shot from his eyes.

"Your name is Hugues de Caverley?" he asked.

"Yes," responded the leader, amazed at the expression of joy on the king's face, and quite unable to guess the reason for it.

"And you are the leader of the English adventurers?" continued Don Pedro.

"Certainly."

"One moment, then," said the king. "Here, Mothril, put the diamonds back in your purse, and return your purse to your pocket."

"And why so?"

"Because I propose to give orders here, and not to receive them," exclaimed Don Pedro, drawing a parchment from his breast.

"Orders!" said Caverley, haughtily. "Know, sire, there is but one person in the world who has a right to give orders to Captain Hugues de Caverley!"

"And that man," replied Don Pedro, "is he whose signature is at the bottom of that parchment. In the name of the Black Prince, Hugues de Caverley, I command you to obey me!"

Caverley shook his head, glancing through the visor of his helmet at the parchment unrolled by the king. But upon seeing its signature he uttered a cry of rage, which brought in all the officers, who had remained outside the tent at a respectful distance.

The parchment which the prisoner had presented to the leader was indeed the safe-conduct given by the Black Prince to Don Pedro, and contained an order for all his English subjects to obey the king in all things till such time as the Black Prince himself should take command of the English army.

"I see that I shall escape more cheaply than you thought, or I either. But be tranquil, you shall be rewarded, my brave!"

"You are right, sir king," he said, his lowered visor concealing an evil smile; "you are free, and I await your orders."

"Then, first of all," said Don Pedro, "order Master Robert, as was your intention, to seek my brother, Henry of Trastamare, and bring him hither."

The scribe sought his master's eye to discover what he was to do, and receiving an affirmative sign from Messire Hugues, he departed.

XXV.

WHICH IS EXPLANATORY, AND CONTINUES THE PRECEDING CHAPTER.

And now we shall learn what had happened after Agénor's departure, or, to speak more exactly, his flight.

After the scene in the garden at Bordeaux, Don Pedro had obtained from the Prince of Wales the protection he needed, in entering Spain again; and, sure of re-enforcements both of men and money, he started upon his journey with Mothril, provided with a safe-conduct from the prince that gave him power and security in case he should meet the English troops.

The little band directed their steps towards the frontier where, as we have already stated, Captain Hugues de Caverley had spread a veritable network to ensnare the unwary.

And yet, in spite of the leader's vigilance and skill as a soldier, it is probable that, with Don Pedro's knowledge of the various neighborhoods through which he travelled, he might have passed through Aragon and reached New Castile without mishap, had it not been for the following episode.

One evening, while the king and Mothril were busied with a great Cordoue parchment representing the Spanish provinces, and were studying the route they must take, the curtains of the litter opened gently, and Aïssa's head came between them.

The young girl glanced towards a slave lying near her litter, and she motioned him to approach.

"Slave," she asked, "of what country art thou?"

"I was born across the seas," he answered, "in the country that looks towards Granada and envies it not."

"And thou wouldst return to thy land?"

"Yes," whispered the slave, sighing deeply.

"To-morrow if thou wilt, thou shalt be free."

"But from here to Lake Laoudiah is far, and a fugitive would perish of hunger before he reached it."

"No; for the fugitive shall carry with him this necklace of pearls, a single one of which would furnish him with all he needs for the journey."

And Aïssa unfastened her necklace, which dropped into the slave's hands.

"And what shall I do to win my freedom and this necklace of pearls," asked the slave, trembling with joy.

"Thou seest," said Aïssa, "yonder gray line that cuts the horizon; it is the camp of the Christians. How long will it take thee to reach it?"

"Before the nightingale has ended his song, I shall be there," replied the slave.

"Then listen well to what I tell thee, and let each word be graven deep upon thy memory."

The slave listened in ecstasy, and as if spellbound.

"Take this letter," continued Aïssa, "reach the camp; once within, thou wilt inquire for a noble French knight, a chief known as the Count of Mauléon. When thou hast been conducted to his presence, thou wilt give him this bag; in return he will give thee one hundred gold pieces. Go!"

The slave seized the bag, concealing it beneath his coarse habit, and, selecting a moment when the mules had escaped to a neighboring wood, he ran after them as if to bring them back again, and disappeared in the woods with the swiftness of an arrow.

No one had remarked the slave's disappearance save Aïssa. Her eyes followed him, and she trembled, scarcely venturing to breathe until he had vanished completely from sight.

All happened as the Moorish girl had expected. It was not long before the slave encountered, as he was entering a coppice, a strange bird of prey with claws of steel, a morion by way of a beak. His supple plumage was of iron mail. He was perched upon a rock overlooking the thicket, where he had placed himself to survey the neighboring country.

The terrified slave emerged from the thicket. The sentinel made ready to swoop down upon his victim, and raising his cross-bow took aim at him.

The fugitive was waiting for this. He motioned with his hand, signifying that he desired to speak. The sentinel came nearer, still holding his bow in position, and the slave told him that he sought the camp of the Christians, and desired to be conducted to Mauléon.

Although Aïssa had exaggerated the importance of that name, it did possess a certain notoriety among the chiefs, since the day when Agénor had displayed such fearlessness after his arrest by the Companies; and he enjoyed still more renown, because it was known that to him was owing the co-operation of the constable.

The soldier uttered the rallying cry, seized the slave by the wrist, and conducted him to a second sentinel close by, who led him to the last outpost of all, behind which was Seigneur Caverley himself, seated in his tent, in the centre of his sentries, like a spider in the centre of its web.

He had noticed a commotion about him, and a rumor had reached his ears. Believing that something unexpected was about to occur, he appeared upon the threshold of his tent.

The slave was led directly to him.

The former uttered the name of the Bastard of Mauléon. It was the passport that had aided him thus far.

"Who sends you?" asked Caverley of the slave, desiring to avoid an explanation.

"Are you the Lord of Mauléon?" asked the slave.

"I am one of his friends," answered Caverley; "one of his dearest friends."

"But that is not the same thing," said the slave. "I have orders to give the letter, of which I am the bearer, to nobody but him."

"Listen," said Caverley. "The Lord of Mauléon is a brave Christian knight, who has a large number of enemies among the Moors and Arabs, who have sworn to assassinate him. And so we have sworn among ourselves that we will allow no one to speak to him unless we know beforehand what message the bearer brings him."

"Well," said the slave, seeing that all resistance would be useless, and moreover the captain's intentions appeared to be friendly, "I was sent by Aïssa."

"Who is Aïssa?" asked Caverley.

"The daughter of Seigneur Mothril."

"Oh!" said the captain, "the councillor of Don Pedro?"

"Yes."

"Ah! the affair is growing more and more mysterious! Who knows but this message contains some magic?"

"Aïssa is not a magician," said the slave, shaking his head.

"That makes no difference. I must read that message."

The slave glanced rapidly about to see whether he might take refuge in flight; but the adventurers had formed a circle about him. He drew Aïssa's bag from his breast and gave it to the captain.

"Read," he said. "You will find something there that concerns me as well."

Caverley's conscience was too elastic to have the least need of this invitation. He opened the bag, perfumed with amber and benzoin, and drew forth a square piece of white silk upon which, with the aid of a thick ink, Aïssa's hand had written in Spanish the following words: —

"My dear lord, I write thee as I promised. The King Don Pedro and Mothril are about to pass through the defile on their way to Aragon. Thou canst with a single blow achieve our eternal happiness and thy glory. Make them thy prisoners, and me with them. I shall be thy willing captive. If thou wouldst, thou canst obtain ransom from them, for they are rich enough to satisfy thy ambition. But if thou preferrest to money, glory, and wouldst give them their liberty without a price, they are great; they can publish thy generosity far and wide. But though thou shouldst set them free, me thou must keep thy prisoner, my noble lord; and I have a casket filled with rubies and emeralds that would grace the diadem of a queen.

"Listen and remember well. This very night we resume our march. Post thy soldiers in the defile so that we cannot pass through it unseen. Our escort is not strong at this moment, but from hour to hour it may become stronger, for six hundred armed men, whom the king expected at Bordeaux, have not been able to rejoin him, so rapid was his march.

"Thus, my dear lord, Aïssa will be thine, and no one can take her from thee, when thou hast won her by the might of thy victorious arms.

"One of our slaves bears thee this message. I have promised that thou wilt set him at liberty and give him a hundred gold pieces. Perform my desire.

"Thine AÏSSA."

"Ho, ho!" thought Caverley, so deeply moved that big drops of sweat began to flow beneath his helmet; "what have I done for Fortune this many a day that she should drop such windfalls as these into my mouth? But first to get rid of this imbecile!

"So," he said, "the Lord of Mauléon owes thee thy liberty and one hundred gold pieces?"

"Yes, captain, and one hundred gold pieces."

Hugues de Caverley did not consider it fitting to answer the last part of this demand, but he called his squire.

"Here," he said, "take your horse, and lead this young man two good leagues from the camp, and leave him there. If he asks for money, and you have over plenty, give him some; but I warn you beforehand that it will be an act of pure liberality on your part.

"Come, my friend," he said, "your errand is performed. I am the Lord of Mauléon!"

The slave prostrated himself.

"And the hundred gold pieces?" he asked.

"This is my treasurer; he will give them to you," said Caverley, pointing to his squire. The slave rose and, overjoyed, followed the new-comer whom Caverley had designated as his treasurer.

Scarcely had he gone a hundred paces from the tent, when the captain sent a detachment into the mountain, and, not disdaining to descend to humbler cares, he himself placed sentinels in the defile, so carefully that no one could cross without being seen, and having commanded that the prisoners were not to be handled violently, he awaited coming events.

We saw him waiting, and events happened as promptly as he desired. The king, impatient to continue his route, desired to resume his journey without further delay. They were surrounded in the ravine, to the great joy of

Aïssa, who impatiently awaited the attack, believing that it was directed by Mauléon; and Caverley's measures were so effective, and the numbers of the English were so great that not one of Don Pedro's men made an effort to defend himself.

But Aïssa, who counted upon seeing Mauléon at the head of this ambuscade, began to feel disturbed at his absence; she thought, however, that possibly prudence prevented him from appearing on the scene, and observing that the enterprise was succeeding quite according to her wishes, she could feel nothing but hope.

And now we cannot be surprised that the adventurer had recognized Don Pedro so easily, who moreover might have been recognized under any circumstances.

As for Mothril and Aïssa, whose history he divined with astonishing perspicacity, he was disturbed when he thought of them, and of the anger which might be kindled in Mauléon at the discovery of this secret; but at once he reflected that it would be not at all difficult to charge the slave with treason, and blame him for everything that had happened; while moreover, by this betrayal of confidence he could also gain a claim to Mauléon's gratitude, for, while compelling the king and Mothril to pay a ransom, he intended to abandon the young girl to Mauléon with complete disinterestedness, and this in itself would show a generosity for which he applauded himself, as it was a complete innovation.

We have seen how the safe-conduct given by the Prince of Wales was exhibited by Don Pedro, lending a new aspect to the affair, and even upsetting plans as bold and ingenious as those which Messire Hughes had devised on the spur of the moment.

After Robert's departure, Don Pedro was busied, narrating to the chief of the adventurers the events

relating to the treaty concluded at Bordeaux, when suddenly a loud noise was heard; the rumbling of horses' hoofs, the rude clangor of arms, the clatter of sword-chains, whilst swords bounded against their master's sides, proclaimed the approach of warriors.

Then the hanging of the tent was abruptly lifted, and there appeared the pale face of Henry of Trastamare; a ray of sinister joy lighted his features.

Mauléon stood behind the prince; he seemed in quest of some one; he saw the litter, and his eyes wandered no more.

At Henry's coming, Don Pedro recoiled; he was as pale as his brother, and his hand felt at his side for his absent sword. He continued to retreat until he touched one of the posts of the tent; here was a complete panoply. He felt something cold to the touch; it was a battle-axe; then he became calm and reassured.

Both gazed silently at each other for a moment, exchanging glances as menacing as thunder-clouds. Henry was the first to break the silence.

"I believe," he said, smiling darkly, "that the war is ended even before it has begun."

"Ah! you believe that, do you?"

"I am so deeply convinced," answered Henry, "that first of all I ask this noble knight, Hugues de Caverley, what price he demands for a capture of such great importance as this he has just made; for, had he taken twenty towns, and won a hundred battles, — exploits which are dearly paid for, — he would not even then have so great a claim upon our gratitude as he has won through this one exploit."

"It flatters me," replied Don Pedro, "to be appreciated at so high a value. And therefore, courtesy for courtesy. And were you placed as you now believe that

I am placed, may I ask at what price you would estimate your person, Don Henry?"

"I believe he is jesting still," said Henry, his fury melting beneath his joy as the polar ice beneath the first smiles of spring.

"Let us look on a little, and see how all this will end," murmured Caverley, seating himself, that he need not lose a single detail of the scene, and beginning to enjoy the spectacle from an artistic standpoint, and as a mere outsider, having lost all eagerness in it as a speculator.

Henry turned towards his brother; he was evidently preparing to reply.

"Well, friend Caverley!" he said, darting towards Don Pedro a glance of consuming hatred; "for this man, this king that was, but to-day wears nothing on his brow but the golden reflection of his crown, I will give you two hundred thousand gold crowns, or two fair cities as you choose."

"Your offer," said Caverley, caressing the chin-piece of his helmet with his hand, while he gazed at Don Pedro through his lowered visor, "your offer is quite acceptable, it seems to me, but —"

Don Pedro replied to the mute interrogation by a gesture and a glance which seemed to say, "Captain, my brother is not generous; I will bid higher."

"But what?" queried Henry, repeating the last word of the adventurer. "What were you about to say, captain?"

Mauléon could no longer contain his desire and his curiosity.

"The captain wished to say, doubtless, that he made other prisoners as well as Don Pedro, and wants to know what they are worth."

"My faith! see what it is to be able to read a man through and through; you are a worthy knight, Sir Agénor. Yes, by my soul, I have made other prisoners, and very illustrious ones, but — "

And a reticence new to the captain seemed to imply that he had not made up his mind.

"You will be paid for them, captain," said Mauléon, bubbling over with impatience; "where are they? In that litter?"

Henry placed his hand upon the young man's shoulder, and gently restrained him.

"Will you accept the offer, Captain Caverley?" he asked.

"I will answer for him, monsieur," said Don Pedro.

"Oh, do not play the master here, Don Pedro, for you are no longer a king," replied Henry, disdainfully; "and it will be time enough to answer me when I speak to you."

Don Pedro turned towards Caverley with a smile.

"Explain to him, captain, that you cannot accept," he said. Again Caverley's hand passed over his visor, as though he would stroke his brow, and drawing Agénor aside, he said, —

"My worthy friend, between good comrades like ourselves the truth should be spoken!"

Agénor looked at him in amazement.

"Well," continued the captain, "if you will believe my word, get through the small opening in the tent behind you, and if you have a good horse, spur him on as fast as he can go."

"We are betrayed," cried Mauléon, a sudden light breaking on him; "to arms, prince, to arms!"

Henry gazed at Mauléon in surprise, and placed his hand mechanically upon the pommel of his sword.

Then Don Pedro, who saw that the comedy was nearly ended, extended his hand with a commanding gesture, and exclaimed, "In the name of the Prince of Wales, I require Messire Hugues de Caverley to arrest Prince Henry of Trastamare." These words were scarcely spoken when Henry had his sword in his hand, but Caverley rose for a moment and put a horn to his lips; at the sound, twenty adventurers rushed upon the prince, and he was disarmed immediately.

"'T is done," said Caverley; "and now, if you will take my advice, sir king, withdraw, for, in a moment, blows will be raining thick and fast here, I 'll answer for it."

"What do you mean?" asked the king.

"That Frenchman who went out through the small door yonder will not allow his prince to be taken without slashing a few limbs and breaking a few heads in his honor."

Don Pedro stooped towards the opening, and saw Agénor, who had sprung to the saddle, and doubtless was hastening to obtain aid.

The king seized a cross-bow, bent it, placed an arrow in it, and aimed at the knight.

"Good," said he. "David killed Goliath with a stone; let us see now whether Goliath cannot kill David with an arbaleste."

"Wait a moment," exclaimed Caverley; "what the devil are you trying to do, sir king? Scarcely here a moment, and you are turning things topsy-turvy for me! And what will our constable say, if I let his friend be killed?"

And his arm raised the end of the cross-bow, just as Don Pedro placed his finger upon the trigger; the vireton shot into the air.

"The constable!" said Don Pedro, stamping his foot; "was it worth while to make me lose my aim through such a fear as that? A huntsman like you, captain! Set your snare and catch this great wild boar, and then the hunt will be ended at once; on that condition I will pardon you."

"Ah! it is easy for you to talk! Take the constable! Fine! I should like to see the man who would take the constable. Good God!" he muttered, shrugging his shoulders, "what braggarts these Spaniards are!"

"Sir Caverley!"

"*Pardieu!* I speak truly. Take the constable! I am not curious, sir king, but I would be much interested to see you take him prisoner."

"And here is one, while we are waiting," said Don Pedro, pointing to Agénor, who had been captured while they were talking.

For, as he passed at a gallop, one of the adventurers had ham-strung his horse with the aid of a crescent, and the horse had fallen, carrying the knight under him. As long as Aïssa believed that her lover was not in this affair, and that he was out of all danger, she did not utter a word or make a single movement. Apparently she had not the slightest interest in the matters that were being discussed around her, however important they were; but when Mauléon was brought in, disarmed and in the hands of his enemies, the curtains of the litter were thrust aside, and the young girl's head appeared; she was paler even than the long thin veil of white wool, Oriental women wear.

Agénor uttered a cry. Aïssa sprang from the litter, and ran toward him.

"Oh, ho!" said Mothril, frowning.

"What does this mean?" asked the king.

"There will have to be an explanation now," murmured Caverley. Henry of Trastamare darted towards Agénor a sullen, mistrustful glance, which the latter understood well.

"You may speak to me," Henry said to Aïssa; "speak out, and be quick, for we are now your prisoners, and we are about to be put to death; there is no time to lose, even for lovers' vows."

"Our prisoners!" exclaimed Aïssa, "oh, I did not desire that, seigneur; that was the farthest from my thoughts."

Caverley struggled with his embarrassment, which increased every moment; this man of iron trembled at the bare thought of facing the accusation of the two young men who had fallen into his hands.

"My letter," said Aïssa to the young man; "did you not receive my letter?"

"What letter?" asked Agénor.

"Enough, enough," said Mothril, whose plans were somewhat disturbed by this scene. "Captain, the king commands you to conduct Henry of Trastamare to Don Pedro's quarters, while this young man will be taken to mine."

"Caverley, you are a coward," roared Agénor, trying to free himself from the rude gauntlets that bound his hands.

"I warned you to escape, and you did not wish to, or you were too slow about it, which amounts to the same thing," said the captain. "By my faith, 't is your own fault. And besides, what are you complaining about? Won't you be near *her?*"

"Hasten, messieurs," said the king; "and this night a council shall be assembled to judge this bastard who says he is my brother, this rebel who pretends to be my

ruler. Caverley, he offered you two towns; I am more generous than he. I will give you a whole province. Mothril, order my men to advance. Before an hour has passed, we must be under shelter in some good castle."

Mothril bowed and went forth; but he had not gone ten steps outside the tent when he fell back precipitately, his hand making a sign which in every language and among all nations commands silence.

"What is it?" asked Caverley, not unable to conceal his uneasiness.

"Speak, good Mothril," said Don Pedro.

"Listen," said the Moor.

And then those present listened, all ears, and for the moment the English tent looked as though an assemblage of statues occupied it.

"Do you hear?" asked Mothril, stooping lower and lower.

And they did begin to hear a sound like the rumbling of thunder, or the gallop of a troop of horsemen coming nearer and nearer.

"Notre Dame, Guesclin!" cried suddenly a firm and sonorous voice.

"Ah! it is the constable!" murmured Caverley, for he recognized the rude war-cry of the Bretons.

"Ah, the constable!" repeated Don Pedro, and though he had never heard it before, he, too, recognized that terrible war-cry.

The prisoners exchanged glances, and a smile of hope played upon their lips.

Mothril approached his daughter, and pressed her closely to him.

"Sir king," said Caverley, with that mocking accent that never left his voice, even when he stood in face of

danger, "you desired to trap the wild boar, I believe! Now he has come himself to spare you the trouble."

Don Pedro motioned to his soldiers, and they ranged themselves about him. Caverley decided to maintain an attitude of strict neutrality between his old companion and his new master, and so he turned aside.

"What are you doing, Caverley?" asked Don Pedro.

"I cede my position to you, sire," said the captain; "are you not my leader, and my king?"

"Very well," said Don Pedro, "see then that I am obeyed."

The sound of horses' hoofs ceased; the clangor of steel was heard, and the sound of a man dismounting, weighed down with armor.

And then Bertrand Du Guesclin entered the tent.

XXVI.

THE SNARING OF THE WILD BOAR.

BEHIND the constable, and glancing about slyly, a smile playing upon his lips, appeared our honest Musaron, covered with dust from head to foot.

And he looked as though he had come specially to explain to all the cause of the constable's startling arrival.

Bertrand raised his visor as he entered, and with a single sweeping glance took in the entire assemblage.

Perceiving Don Pedro, he bowed slightly; discovering Henry of Trastamare, saluted him respectfully, and going up to Caverley, grasped him by the hand.

"Good day, captain," he said calmly, "this time we have taken a noble prize. Ah, Messire de Mauléon, pardon me! I had not seen you before."

These words seemed to indicate such absolute ignorance of the situation that nearly all the observers of the scene were stupefied. But Bertrand, not in the least impressed by a silence almost solemn, continued, —

"I hope, however, Captain Caverley, that the prisoner has been treated with all the consideration that he merits on account of his rank, and still more on account of his misfortune."

Henry was about to reply, but Don Pedro interrupted: —

"Oh, yes, sir constable, rest assured we have had for the prisoner all the respect his rights demand."

"*You* have had!" repeated Bertrand, with an expression of surprise that would have done credit to the cleverest comedian. "*You* have had! If it please Your Highness, what does this mean?"

"Yes, messire constable," said Don Pedro, with a smile; "'we have had' — I repeat the words."

Bertrand regarded Caverley, his features impassible beneath his steel visor.

"I do not understand," said Bertrand.

"Dear constable," said Henry, rising from his seat with difficulty, for he had been bruised and garroted by the soldiers, and in the struggle these cuirassed men had almost smothered him in their iron arms, — "dear constable, Don Frederic's assassin is quite right; it is he who is now our master, and treachery has made us his prisoners."

"What is this?" said Bertrand, gazing about with such a terrible expression that more than one countenance grew pale. "Treachery, you tell me; where is the traitor?"

"Sir constable," said Caverley, recoiling slightly, "it should not be called treachery, it seems to me, but fidelity rather."

"Fidelity!" exclaimed the constable, his amazement apparently increasing.

"Certainly, fidelity," continued Caverley, "for we are English, are we not? — consequently subjects of the Prince of Wales!"

"Even so, what has that to do with it?" said Bertrand, expanding his huge shoulders as if he was stifled for air, while his heavy iron hand dropped upon the hilt of his sword. "Who ever said, my dear Caverley, that you are not a subject of the Prince of Wales?"

"Then you understand, seigneur, for no person com-

prehends better than you what discipline demands, that I was compelled to obey my prince's order."

"And here it is," said Don Pedro, extending the parchment towards Bertrand.

"I cannot read," answered the constable, brusquely.

Don Pedro withdrew the parchment, and Caverley shivered, brave though he was.

"Well," continued Du Guesclin, "I believe that now I understand. Don Pedro was taken prisoner by Captain Caverley. He showed the safe-conduct given him by the Prince of Wales, and immediately the captain restored Don Pedro to liberty."

"That is just the way it happened," said Caverley, hoping for a moment that Du Guesclin would approve the exquisite loyalty of his conduct.

"Nothing could be plainer," said the constable.

Caverley breathed more freely.

"But there is one point which is not quite clear to me."

"What is that?" demanded Don Pedro, haughtily. "But make haste, Messire Bertrand, for all these questions are becoming somewhat wearisome."

"I will end them," said Bertrand, his features as terribly impassive as ever. "I would like to know why it was necessary to take Don Henry prisoner in order to liberate Don Pedro."

At these words, and Bertrand's attitude in pronouncing them, Mothril considered that the moment had come to summon a re-enforcement of Moors and English to the assistance of Don Pedro. Bertrand remained immovable, and did not even appear to have noticed this manœuvre. His voice became colder and calmer than ever, if that were possible.

"I await an answer," he said, and this time Don Pedro gave it.

"I am surprised," he answered, "that there should be such widespread ignorance among French knights that they do not even know he reaps double profit, who, in disarming an enemy, makes a friend."

"Are you also of this opinion?" asked Bertrand, fixing upon Caverley a look which, calm though it was, threatened and commanded.

"It must be so, messire," said the captain; "it is my duty to obey."

"And my duty, on the contrary, is to command," said Bertrand, "and I order you, do you hear? I order you to liberate His Highness, the Prince Don Henry of Trastamare, whom I see yonder guarded by your soldiers; and, as I am more courteous than you, I will not command that you arrest Don Pedro, even although I have the right, for it is my money you have in your pocket, and I pay you to serve me."

Caverley made a movement, but Don Pedro restrained him.

"Do not reply to him, captain," he said; "there is but one master here, and I am that one. You will obey me, and upon the field, if you desire. Bastard Don Henry, and Messire Bertrand, and you, Count of Mauléon, I declare all three of you my prisoners!"

At these terrible words deep silence fell upon the camp. In the midst of this stillness, six warriors, at a sign from Don Pedro, left the others, to secure Du Guesclin as they had already secured Don Henry; but the good knight, with a blow of his fist, that fist which had battered so many armors, knocked down the first one who presented himself, and uttering the cry of "Notre Dame, Guesclin!" with his mighty voice that resounded far across the plain, he drew his sword.

In a moment the tent presented a spectacle of terrible

confusion. Agénor, scarcely guarded any longer, with one effort had escaped from the two soldiers who were guarding him, and had joined Bertrand. Henry's teeth had cut the last cord which bound his wrists.

Mothril, Don Pedro, and the Moors formed a threatening angle.

Aïssa's head was thrust through the curtains of her litter, and, forgetful of everything but her lover, she cried, "Courage, my noble lord, courage!"

Caverley had retired, leading his English soldiers with him, desiring to observe neutrality as long as possible; but, to be prepared for any emergency, he gave the signal to saddle.

The combat began. Arrows, viretons, balls of lead shot from slings, began to whistle through the air, and to rain upon the three knights, when suddenly a tremendous clamor was heard, and a troop of warriors entered the tent on horseback, cutting, slashing, causing the utmost confusion, and raising clouds of thunder that blinded the furious combatants.

By their cry, "Guesclin! Guesclin!" they were at once recognized as the Bretons commanded by Le Bègue de Vilaine, the inseparable friend of Du Guesclin, whom he had posted at the enclosure of the camp with the injunction not to charge until he heard the cry of "Notre Dame, Guesclin!"

There was for a moment strange confusion in this tent that had been turned topsy-turvy, rent, and open to the winds of heaven; there was a moment when friends and foes found themselves thrown together, a blind heap in which reigned hopeless confusion; then that cloud of dust was scattered, and, as the first rays of the sun crossed the mountains of Castile, the Bretons found themselves masters of the field. Don Pedro, Mothril,

Aïssa, and the Moors had disappeared like figures in a dream. Men whom battle-axes and swords had mowed down, were lying upon the ground in their last agony; and had it not been for this sight, one might well have believed that the contestants had been a host of fleeting phantoms.

Agénor was the first to observe that the others had disappeared; he sprang upon the first horse he found, without perceiving that it was wounded, and hastened towards the nearest hillock, from which he might look across the plain. From that point he could see five Arabian horses making for the woods. Through the blue morning mists he saw Aïssa's fluttering veil and woollen robe. Without concerning himself to see whether he was being followed, mastered by mad despair, he urged on his horse in pursuit, but after a few paces the horse fell, never to rise again.

The young man returned to the litter; it was deserted; he found only a bouquet of roses, still moist with tears.

At the extremity of the lines, the English soldiers, drawn up in order, awaited only Caverley's command to make an attack. The captain had arranged his forces so cleverly that they quite encircled and shut in the Bretons. Bertrand, at a glance, saw that the object of this manœuvre was to cut off retreat.

Caverley advanced.

"Messire Bertrand," said he, "to prove to you that we are loyal companions we will open ranks, that you may regain your quarters. This will show you that the English are true to their word, and that they respect the chivalry of the King of France."

During this speech, Bertrand, silent, and calm as though nothing of an extraordinary nature had taken

place, had mounted his steed again, and taken his lance from his squire's hands. He looked about him, and saw that Agénor had done the same. All his Bretons were in order, and ready to charge.

"Sir Englishman," he said, "you are a knave, and if it were in my power I would hang you to yonder chestnut-tree."

"Ah, messire constable," exclaimed Caverley, "take care! You may compel me to make you prisoner in the name of the Prince of Wales."

"Bah!" said Du Guesclin.

Caverley understood perfectly all that threatened him when he heard the constable's mocking intonation.

"Close ranks!" he cried to his men, who did so, presenting a solid wall of iron to the Bretons.

"Children," said Bertrand to his braves, "'t is almost time for breakfast; our tents are yonder, let us return to them."

And he spurred his horse so abruptly that Caverley had barely time to spring sideways and let that iron whirlwind descending upon him, pass on.

And behind Bertrand and with equal violence his Bretons rushed, led by Agénor. Henry of Trastamare, almost against his will, had been placed in the centre of the little band.

At such a time a man who is skilled in the use of arms, and endowed with great physical force, is worth twenty men. Bertrand directed his lance so dexterously that he swept down the first Englishman it encountered.

After that first gap was made, there came a clashing of breaking lances, cries of wounded men, crashing blows of battle-axes, and the neighing of steeds crushed in this furious collision.

And when Caverley looked about him, he saw a great

bloody gap where his men had been, and many paces away he beheld the Bretons galloping on past the breach, as if they had merely been crossing a field of ripened corn.

He shook his head. "And I never meant," he murmured, "to risk an encounter with those brutes! The devil take all boasters, say I! This escapade loses me a dozen horses at least, and four men, to say nothing — oh, miserable that I am! — to say nothing of a king's ransom. Come, march, be quick there, messieurs! From this day forth we are Castilians! We shall have a new banner."

And that very day the adventurer set out to rejoin Don Pedro.

XXVII.

THE POLITICS OF MESSIRE BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN.

SOME hours had passed since the Bretons, Prince Henry, and Mauléon had found themselves again in safety; and to Agénor it seemed ages since that white point moving so rapidly upon the plain had vanished from his sight in the windings of the mountains bordering the horizon. The plain was gleaming now in the morning sunshine, but to Agénor it seemed that love and joy and all his hopes had vanished.

The different personages of this history found themselves placed so strangely at this time that the spectacle offered no lack of variety; for chance had brought them all together, while the background upon which all these figures moved was that magnificent country over which Agénor's eyes wandered.

And now the little band of fugitives which had fled with the swiftness of the eagle appeared again upon a winding ascent of the mountain. Mothril's red mantle could be seen distinctly, and also Aïssa's white veil, and a luminous point of steel upon Don Pedro's helmet, a point which seemed afire beneath the sun's burning ray.

Pursuing a middle course along the mountain Caverley's troops, again in line, were following the mountain road. Those farthest ahead were lost from sight in the woods at the base of the mountains.

On the plain below, Henry of Trastamare sat, leaning against a gigantic furze-bush; his horse was wandering across the plain, unheeded by him. From time to time he

gazed at his wrists, which still bore the marks of the cords that had bound them; he seemed dazed by his suffering.

The only recollection he retained of that terrible scene in Caverley's tent served merely to remind him that two short hours ago Don Pedro had been in his power; that for one brief moment Fortune had smiled upon him, only to hurl him from the topmost pinnacle of premature prosperity, that he might sound the profoundest depths of the dark abyss of uncertainty and impotency.

Near Henry some Bretons, overcome with fatigue, were lying upon the grass. These worthy knights were obedient automatons but one degree removed from the shepherd-dog or the beast of burden; for, having once acted, they never troubled themselves to reflect afterwards, and remarking that Du Guesclin, a few paces away, was reflecting for them, they covered their faces with their cloaks, and fell asleep.

But Le Bègue de Vilaine and Olivier de Mauny were not sleeping; far from it. They were watching the English with closest and profoundest attention; the advance-guard, as we mentioned before, was fast disappearing in the woods, and the rear-guard was busied in taking down their tents and loading their mules. Caverley could be distinguished in the midst of the workers, passing through the ranks, like an armed spectre, watching the execution of each order he gave.

And so all these human beings, scattered over the vast landscape, and fleeing to all points of the compass like startled ants, were united by one sentiment they shared in common. And only Omnipotence looking down upon them from high Heaven could understand them; and it read in every heart except Aïssa's, one absorbing sentiment, — a desire for revenge.

But again Mothril, Don Pedro, and Aïssa were lost in a winding of the mountains; the rear-guard of the English had also disappeared in the woods. Mauléon was no longer able to see Aïssa; Le Bègue de Vilaine and Olivier de Mauny had lost Caverley from sight. They drew near to Bertrand who had paused in his reverie to move closer to Henry, who was still absorbed in his own musings.

Bertrand smiled upon them. He had been seated upon a knoll, from which he rose with some difficulty, owing to the iron joints of his armor; he stepped up to Henry, who was still leaning against a gigantic furze-bush.

The weight of his armor made his footsteps still heavier. They shook the ground, and yet Henry never moved from his place.

Bertrand was now so near that his shadow came between the prince and the sun, depriving the unhappy seigneur of the tender consolation of those heavenly rays, which like life itself seems dearest when it is lost to us.

Henry raised his head to reclaim his lost sun, and beheld the constable leaning upon his long sword, his visor half-raised, and his glance kindling with encouragement and compassion.

"Ah, constable," said the prince, shaking his head, "what a day this has been!"

"Bah, monseigneur," said Bertrand, "I have seen worse!"

The prince made no reply, but cast an accusing glance towards Heaven.

"Faith," continued Bertrand, "I can only remember one thing now. We might have been prisoners at this moment, and, instead, we are free."

"But, constable, do you not see that we have lost all?"

"All? what do you mean?"

"The King of Castile, by Saint James!" exclaimed Henry with a sudden movement so threatening, so full of rage, that the knights near him trembled; for though his words vibrated in their ears, and drew them to him, they could not forget, even while they listened, that this enemy whom he so deeply loathed was his brother.

Bertrand had not approached the prince merely to be nearer; he had something to say to him; for he had just surprised an expression of weariness upon every face, and it seemed to tell him that his army had begun to be discouraged.

He motioned the prince to be seated. The latter did so, understanding that the constable was about to broach something of importance; and among all those faces upon which discouragement was plainly written, Don Henry's was not the least expressive.

Bertrand bowed, resting his hands upon the pommel of his sword.

"Pardon, monseigneur, I interrupt the tenor of your thoughts; but I wish to speak with you upon a single point."

"What is it, my dear constable?" asked Henry, somewhat disturbed by this preamble; for, to assist him in accomplishing the mighty act of usurpation, he had only the loyalty of the Bretons to depend upon, and there are certain minds incapable of any great faith in the loyalty of others.

"You observed a moment ago, monseigneur, that the King of Castile has escaped."

"Certainly, I said so."

"Well, that is doubtful, monseigneur, and I promise to extricate your faithful servants from the state of uncertainty into which your words have plunged them. Is there really any other King of Castile than yourself?"

Henry raised his head as a bull does when it feels the point of the picador.

"Explain, my dear constable," he said.

"That is an easy matter. If you and I do not know what opinion to hold upon this subject, you can understand that my Bretons and your Castilians will hardly know what to think; and the people of the other Spanish provinces, who are not even as well informed as your Castilians and my Bretons, will never know whether they should cry 'Long live the King Don Henry,' or 'Long live the King Don Pedro!'"

Henry listened without knowing what the constable was driving at. Nevertheless, as the reasoning seemed extremely logical, he nodded his head in approbation.

"Well?" he said at last.

"If indeed there are two kings," continued Du Guesclin, "that causes confusion. Let us get rid of one of them!"

"But is not that exactly the point we are fighting for?" asked Henry.

"Very true; but we have not yet won one of those brilliant battles which dethrones a king once and forever; and whilst we are awaiting that event which shall decide Castile's destiny and your own, you do not even know yourself whether you are king or not."

"What matters it, if I wish to be?"

"Then be king."

"But, my dear constable, am I not in your eyes the only true king?"

"That is not enough; all the world must think the same."

"That would be impossible, unless we were to win a great battle, or have the acclamation of an entire army, or take some great city."

"And that is exactly what I have been thinking of, monseigneur."

"You?"

"Yes, even I. Do you fancy because I strike hard that I cannot think? Be undeceived. I am not always pounding, and I sometimes *think*. You said that only the acclamation of an army, or a battle gained, or the taking of a city,—one of these things,—could crown you."

"Yes; one of those three things at least is necessary."

"Very well, let us have one of them at once!"

"But that seems a difficult matter, constable, even if it be not impossible."

"How so, sire?"

"Because I have fears."

"Ah! but if you have fears I have none, monseigneur," said the constable, boldly. "You need do nothing; I will undertake everything."

"Our downfall will be all the greater, constable; we shall fall from such a height that we can never get on our feet again."

"Unless the grave itself should open to receive your fall, monseigneur, you can always pick yourself up again, especially as you have four Breton knights at your service, and that bright Castilian sword at your side. Come, monseigneur, take heart, be resolute!"

"Oh, I have resolution enough upon occasion, rest assured, messire constable," answered Henry, his eyes sparkling, for the realization of his dream did not seem so far away as before. "But I see no chance of a battle, and I have no army."

"Yes, but the city lies before you!"

Henry glanced about him.

"Where are kings crowned in this country, monseigneur?" asked Du Guesclin.

"At Burgos."

"Yes; and though my geographical knowledge is scarcely extensive, I believe, monseigneur, that Burgos is not very distant."

"No, it is not more than twenty or twenty-five leagues distant, at the utmost."

"Then we will go to Burgos!"

"Burgos!" exclaimed Henry.

"Certainly, Burgos! and if you have the least desire for that city, I will give it to you, as surely as my name is Du Guesclin."

Henry shook his head doubtfully. "A fortified city, a capital, — a city which contains not only the nobility, but a powerful middle class made up of Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans, at variance with each other in ordinary times, but quite ready to unite as friends when their privileges stand in peril! Burgos, the very key of Castile, which seems to have been chosen as the most impregnable sanctuary that could possibly be found for a crown and royal insignia!"

"Then to Burgos we will go, if it please you, monseigneur," said Bertrand, tranquilly.

"Friend," said the prince, "do not permit yourself to be carried away by a sentiment of affection, or one of exaggerated devotion. Consider our forces."

"To horse, monseigneur!" said Bertrand, seizing the bridle of the prince's steed, which was still straying among the furze; "to horse, and on to Burgos!"

And at a sign from the constable, a Breton trumpeter gave the signal. The sleepers were the first to hear and spring to the saddle, and Bertrand, who observed them with a father's affection and the watchfulness of a chief,

noticed that most of them, instead of surrounding the prince as was their custom, preferred to encircle the constable as though they recognized in him their only leader.

"It was time," said the constable in a low voice to Agénor.

"For what?" asked the latter, rousing himself as if from a dream.

"Time to refresh the activity of our soldiers," said he.

"Indeed that will not be a bad idea, constable," answered the young man, "for it is hard for men to march when they know not whither they go, or for whom." Bertrand smiled; Agénor had responded to his own thought, and consequently proved that it was not far wrong.

"You are not speaking for yourself, are you?" asked Bertrand; "for you have ever been the foremost one, it seems to me, when there was a march or an attack for the glory of our country."

"Yes, yes, messire, I ask nothing better than to fight and to be on the move. And no one can go as swiftly as I desire."

And saying these words, Agénor sprung to the stirrups, and his glance seemed to leap beyond the mountains that bordered the horizon.

Bertrand said nothing; he had read all these natures well; and now he contented himself with consulting a herdsman who informed him that the directest road to Burgos was by way of Calahorra, a town scarcely six leagues distant.

"Let us reach Calahorra then as speedily as possible," said the constable, and he spurred on his horse by way of example.

And behind him was heard the formidable sound of that ring of iron mail, in the centre of which was Henry of Trastamare.

XXVIII.

THE MESSENGER.

Towards the end of the second day of their march, the troops commanded by Henry of Trastamare and Bertrand Du Guesclin came in sight of the town of Calahorra. Their forces had been recruited meanwhile by divers small companies scattered over the various neighborhoods through which they passed, till they numbered about ten thousand men.

The experiment they were about to make upon Calahorra would almost decide matters, for Calahorra was both advance-guard and sentinel of Burgos; they could judge somewhat of the sentiments of Old Castile towards themselves by their reception there; it was their starting-point which would lead to success or to failure. They paused before the town, and Don Henry's march assumed a warlike character. Calahorra entered without difficulty, Don Henry continued his triumphal course.

The army was well disposed towards him; a general rumor had spread that Don Pedro had crossed the mountains to rejoin certain Moorish and Aragonese troops, of whose whereabouts they were informed.

The gates of the town were closed; the soldiers who guarded them were at their posts; sentinels, shouldering their arbalestes, were seen upon the walls, pacing to and fro, and though the aspect of the town was not threatening, it was certainly prepared for defence.

Du Guesclin conducted his little army to one of the gates within arrow-shot of the ramparts. He mustered his forces about the standard, and delivered a discourse stamped with his Breton assurance, and the cleverness of a man who had received his training at the court of Charles V. He ended by proclaiming Don Henry of Trastamare King of both Castiles, of Seville, and of Leon, in place of Don Pedro who had committed the twofold crime of murder and sacrilege, and had proved himself unworthy to bear the name of knight.

Bertrand pronounced these solemn words with the full strength of his vigorous lungs, and in reply, ten thousand swords leaped from their scabbards; and, just as the sun was sinking behind the mountains of Navarre, Calahorra, from the ramparts above, witnessed the imposing spectacle of the downfall of a throne, and the rising of a new star in the firmament of royalty.

Bertrand after having spoken his mind, and permitted his army to do the same, looked towards the town as if to ask what it thought about the matter.

The freemen of Calahorra, though it was strongly walled and well supplied with arms and provisions, were not long in making up their minds.

The constable's attitude was decided, his warriors, with pointed lances, were not less so. The people probably reflected that the mere weight of all this cavalry might be sufficient to crush their walls and what simpler way to escape from such a misfortune than to open the gates themselves? And they responded to the acclamations of the army with an enthusiastic cry of —

"Long live Don Henry of Trastamare, King of the Castiles, of Seville, and of Leon!"

These first acclamations, pronounced in the Castilian tongue, moved Henry profoundly; he raised the visor

of his casque, and, advancing alone towards the walls, he cried, —

"Say 'Long live good King Henry;' for Calahorra shall find my goodness to her so great that she will remember forever being the first to salute me King of the Castiles!"

At this master-stroke of policy, the enthusiasm of the people reached a perfect frenzy; the gates opened as though at the touch of a fairy's wand, and the citizens with their wives and children came running out of the town, and mingled with the royal troops.

And an hour later began one of those splendid feasts for which Nature's bounty is all-sufficient: an abundance of flowers, all the wine and honey that fair land afforded, the music of psalters and dulcimers, the voices of women, and gleaming of waxen tapers, chiming of bells, and chanting of priests; an excess of delight intoxicated the new king and his companions until daybreak.

Bertrand in the meanwhile had assembled his Bretons in counsel, and said to them: —

"Don Henry of Trastamare has been proclaimed king, though not yet consecrated. You see you are no longer upholding the cause of an adventurer, but a prince who possesses lands and fiefs and titles. I wager that Cavverley will regret now that he is no longer with us."

He was followed with that profound attention which was always accorded him, not merely on account of his leadership but because his bravery as a warrior was not greater than his prudence and experience; he proceeded to explain what he meant or rather hoped to accomplish, and his listeners soon made his hopes their own.

He had just finished this address when some one came to announce to him that the prince desired the presence

of his faithful allies and himself at the town palace of Calahorra, which had been placed at the disposal of the new sovereign.

Bertrand responded immediately to this invitation. He found Henry seated upon a throne, a circlet of gold, the sign of royalty, surrounding the crest of his casque.

"Sir constable," said the prince, extending his hand to Du Guesclin, "you have made me king, I now make you a count; to you who have given me an empire, I offer an earldom. And since I have you to thank for it, that I am called not merely Don Henry of Trastamare, but also King of the Castiles and of Seville and of Leon, you shall owe to me a new title, and Bertrand Du Guesclin, constable of France, shall add to his titles that of the Count of Soria."

And then the acclamation of leaders and soldiers told the king that the act which his gratitude had inspired was approved as a reasonable one.

"As for yourselves, noble captains," continued the king, "my gifts cannot equal your merits, but your conquests, by extending my dominions and augmenting my wealth, will also add to your own riches and power."

And then he commanded that gold plate, silver plate, horses, and equipages, and whatever precious things the palace of Calahorra contained should be distributed, and he declared that the governor of the town should be governor of the province as well. Then, advancing to the edge of the balcony, he distributed among the soldiers eighty thousand gold crowns remaining to him, and pointing to his empty coffers he said, —

"I intrust them to your care; we shall replenish them at Burgos!"

"To Burgos!" cried soldiers and captains.

"To Burgos," the people repeated; for they consid-

ered that the previous night, passed in feasting, libations, and embracings, had been proof quite sufficient of their paternal regard, and prudence counselled them not to repeat the performance too often, for it might degenerate and lead to abuse.

Meanwhile day had dawned. The army was ready to depart; the pennons of Castilians and Bretons were waving; above all rose the royal standard; but suddenly a loud noise was heard at the principal gate of Calahorra, and the cries of the people approaching from the heart of the town proclaimed an event of importance.

He whose arrival they announced was a messenger. Bertrand rode in advance. Henry turned about, smiling.

"Make way for him," he said. The crowd did so.

And then a man was seen, mounted upon an Arabian courser, with steaming nostrils and long mane; its delicate legs quivered; the stranger's face was bronzed, and he was enveloped in a white burnous.

"The Prince Don Henry?" he asked.

"Do you wish to speak to the king?" asked Du Guesclin.

"I know of no other king than Don Pedro," responded the Arab.

"Here is one at least who does not change his opinions," thought the constable.

"Very well," answered the prince, "but be brief. I am he with whom you would speak."

The messenger bowed without descending from his horse.

"Whence come you?" asked Don Henry.

"From Burgos."

"And who sent you?"

"The King Don Pedro."

"Don Pedro at Burgos!" exclaimed Henry.

"Yes, seigneur," replied the messenger.

Henry and Bertrand exchanged glances again.

"And what desires Don Pedro?"

"Peace," said the Arab.

"Oh, that is good news," said Bertrand, whose probity made him forget all other interests.

Henry frowned.

Agénor trembled with joy, for peace meant liberty to follow Aïssa, and to win her.

"And this peace," asked Henry, sharply, — "first of all we would know upon what condition it will be accorded to us."

"State what you desire, as we have done," said the envoy, "and it will be no difficult matter to obtain my master's agreement to it."

But meanwhile Bertrand had reflected that the mission Charles had intrusted him with meant vengeance against Don Pedro, and the destruction of the Free Companies.

"You cannot accept peace," he said to Henry, "until your position is such that you can insist upon favorable conditions."

"That was what I thought, but I was waiting for your assent," responded Henry, very quickly, for he trembled at the thought of sharing with another that which he desired entirely for himself.

"What is monseigneur's answer?" asked the messenger.

"Respond for me, Count of Soria," said the king.

"I will do so, sire," answered Bertrand, bowing.

Then he turned towards the messenger.

"Sir herald," he said, "return unto your master, and say to him we will make terms of peace after we have reached Burgos!"

"Burgos!" exclaimed the messenger, and his voice expressed more fear than surprise.

"Yes, when we have reached Burgos."

"The great city which Don Pedro holds with his entire army?"

"The very same," said the constable.

"And is this your message also, seigneur?" asked the herald, turning towards Henry of Trastamare.

The prince nodded affirmatively.

"Then may God preserve you!" said the envoy, covering his head with his mantle.

Then, making an obeisance to the prince, as he had done before on his arrival, he turned his horse's bridle, and slowly departed, passing through the crowd, which watched him leave, disappointed in its hopes, mute and motionless.

"You must hasten, sir messenger," said Bertrand, "if you do not wish us to arrive before you."

The horseman, without turning his head, or appearing to perceive that these words were addressed to him, changed his horse's pace from a moderate trot to a gallop, and then spurred him on at so breathless a pace that he was lost from sight on the ramparts above, before the advance-guard of the Bretons passed forth from the gates of Calahorra on their march to Burgos.

Some rumors seem to traverse space like atoms sped by the wind; they are as intangible as a breath, a perfume, or a ray of sunlight. They penetrate space like a flash of lightning, and carry a message of warning. No one has yet been able to explain this phenomenon, yet we know that an event can sometimes be divined twenty leagues away from the spot where it happened, so that what was at first mere rumor becomes certainty. Some day, perhaps, science will understand this phenomenon

so well that she will no longer attempt even an explanation of it, but will regard as a principle that which we look upon now as a mystery of the human mind.

Certain it is that the very evening of the day Don Henry entered Calahorra at the constable's side, the news that Henry had been proclaimed King of the Castiles, of Seville, and of Leon, reached Burgos a quarter of an hour after Don Pedro himself arrived.

Had some eagle passing through the clouds borne this message in his talons, and dropped it there? None can say; but in a few moments every one was convinced of its truth.

Don Pedro alone remained doubtful. Mothril repeated to him the general opinion, adding, "I fear that it is true, for since every one is talking of it, it must be so."

"But," said Don Pedro, "even if this bastard has entered Calahorra, it is not probable that he has been proclaimed king."

"If he was not yesterday, he will certainly be to-day," said Mothril.

"Then let us march upon him, and make war," said Don Pedro.

"No," said Mothril; "we will stay where we are, and make peace."

"Peace!"

"Yes, purchase it even, if necessary!"

"Wretch!" cried Don Pedro, furiously.

But Mothril shrugged his shoulders. "Does a promise cost so dear, especially when it is the king's promise, seigneur?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Don Pedro, beginning to understand.

"What is it Don Henry desires?" continued Moth-

ril. "A throne! Very well; give him one of whatever size pleases you, — you can hurl him from it afterwards. If you make him a king, he will no longer defy that one who has placed a crown upon his head. And what advantage, let me ask you, do you derive from having in these strange regions a rival who may descend at any moment like a thunderbolt, one knows not when or where? Give him a kingdom, and then entice him within limits well known to yourself; do with him what is done with the sturgeon, to whom is given a whole pond with a thousand hiding-places; one is always sure of finding him in the basin thus prepared for him."

"True," said Don Pedro, with increasing attention.

"If he asks you for Leon," continued Mothril, "give him Leon. When he has once received it, he will have to thank you for it; then you will have him at your side, at your table, within arm's length, for a day or an hour, or at least for ten minutes' time. Fortune will never offer you such an opportunity as that, so long as you continue to make war upon each other. They say he is at Calahorra; give him all that lies between Calahorra and Burgos; you will have brought him one step nearer."

Suddenly Don Pedro comprehended what Mothril meant.

"Yes," he murmured thoughtfully, "it was thus I brought Don Frederic nearer."

"Ah," said Mothril, "I was beginning to think you had forgotten that!"

"You have counselled well," said Don Pedro, his hand resting for a moment upon Mothril's shoulder.

And the king despatched to Don Henry one of those indefatigable Moors who measure a day's space by the thirty leagues' distance their horses can traverse.

Mothril had no doubt that Henry would accept terms, if only in the hope of wresting the other half of the empire from Don Pedro, after receiving the first. But he had reckoned without the constable; and when the response was brought from Calahorra, Don Pedro and his counsellors were filled with consternation, for they exaggerated the results of the message.

Don Pedro had an army, to be sure, but an army is not so powerful when besieged as when laying siege. He had Burgos, but was the fidelity of Burgos to be depended upon?

Mothril did not conceal from Don Pedro that the inhabitants of Burgos were reputed to be very partial to novelties.

"We will burn the city," said Don Pedro.

Mothril shook his head.

"Burgos," he said, "is not a city that can be easily burned. To begin with, it is inhabited by Christians, who detest the Moors, and the Moors are your friends; many of its people are Mussulmans, and they detest the Jews; the Jews are your treasurers. And, lastly, a portion of the inhabitants are Jews, who detest the Christians. There is a large number of Christians in your army. These men will merely destroy each other, and not Don Henry's army. More than that, any one party among them would be ready to betray the other two to Don Henry. Believe me, sire, it is best to find some pretext for leaving Burgos, and I counsel you, leave it at once, before the news of Don Henry's decision reaches the people."

"If I leave Burgos, the city is lost to me," said Don Pedro, hesitating.

"By no means; for when you return to besiege Don Henry he will then be placed in the same position as is

ours at present, and as you perceive he has the advantage over us now, we shall have it later. We must retreat, monseigneur."

"Flight!" exclaimed Don Pedro, raising his clinched hand towards heaven.

"He who goes, to return, does not flee, sire."

Don Pedro still hesitated. But his own observations persuaded him as counsel could not. For he noticed that crowds were gathering at the entrance of the gates, and in still greater numbers assembled in the squares; and among the men who made up these groups he overheard one saying, —

"The King Don Henry!"

"Mothril," he said, "you are right. I believe now myself that it is time to depart."

Two minutes later, the King Don Pedro left Burgos, at the same moment that the banners of Don Henry of Trastamare appeared at the summit of the mountains of the Asturias.

XXIX.

THE CORONATION.

THE inhabitants of Burgos trembled at the thought of standing between the two competitors, seeing that in this event they must defray the expenses of a war. No sooner had they obtained knowledge of Don Pedro's retreat, and perceived Don Henry's standard, than they experienced a revulsion of feeling quite easy to understand, and became the new king's most zealous partisans.

In civil wars of this kind, he who permits another to gain even a temporary advantage over him, must fall somewhat lower in popular estimation than his inferiority warrants, for civil war is not merely a conflict of interests, but of self-love as well. And so the counsel given by Mothril, though in strict keeping with his Moorish views, — which were quite different from ours, where an appreciation of courage was concerned, — was a piece of advice which had no very favorable effect upon the Christians, who really formed a majority of the population at Burgos.

Moreover, the Jewish and Mohammedan population, hoping to gain something by the change, united with the Christians in proclaiming Don Henry King of the Castiles, of Seville, and of Leon, and declaring that Don Pedro had forfeited the rank of king.

And so it was in the midst of unanimous acclamations that Don Henry, conducted by the Bishop of Burgos, found himself quartered in the palace from which Don Pedro had scarcely departed.

Du Guesclin installed his Bretons in Burgos, surrounding them with the French and Italian Companies that had remained faithful to their engagements. In this way he watched the city without harassing it. Moreover, the strictest discipline was established; the least theft was punishable with death among the Bretons, and among the other forces with a flogging. For he understood that in handling these people, who had voluntarily permitted themselves to be conquered, there was need of the utmost caution; and it was most necessary that his army should be adopted by these new adherents of the cause of usurpation.

"And now," he said to Henry, "all the solemnity you please, monseigneur! Send for the princess, your wife; she is eagerly awaiting news in Aragon; she must be crowned queen at your coronation. For in ceremonies of the sort, — often have I observed this in France, — nothing else is so impressive as women and cloth of gold. And besides, some people not over-affectionately disposed to yourself, but quite willing to turn their backs upon your brother, will be seized with sudden zeal for the new queen, especially if she is, as all say, one of the fairest and most gracious princesses in Christendom.

"Moreover," added the constable, "your brother cannot emulate you there, for he has murdered his wife. And when all observe how noble a spouse Juana of Castile possesses, they will begin to ask, among themselves, what became of Blanche of Bourbon."

The king smiled at these words, whose logic was unanswerable; and while they appealed to his intelligence, they also flattered his pride and his love of ostentation. The queen was summoned to Burgos.

The town was adorned with tapestries; garlands hung from the walls; palm-branches were strewn in the streets,

which were hidden with a green carpet. On every side, attracted by the spectacle that was promised them, unarmed Castilians ran hither and hither, not yet decided, perhaps, as to their allegiance, but quite willing at least to be impressed, and ready to decide after they had observed all this ceremony and the munificence of their new master.

When the queen's arrival was announced, Du Guesclin placed himself at the head of his Bretons and went forth to receive her, a league from the town.

In truth, this Juana of Castile was a fair princess, and her splendid adornment and royal equipage enhanced her charms. The Chronicle tells us that she rode in a car decorated with gold cloth and gems. The three sisters of the king accompanied her, and their maids of honor followed, their equipages equally magnificent. Around these gay palanquins a host of pages, resplendent in silk, gold, and jewels, rode their prancing steeds,— those superb coursers of mixed Arabian and Andalusian breed, swift as the wind and proud as the Castilians themselves.

The sun's rays flashed upon this brilliant retinue, and penetrated the glass panes of the cathedral, warming the vapor that rose from Egyptian incense which monks were burning in golden censers.

Mingling with Christians who followed the queen were Mussulmans adorned with their richest caftans, looking admiringly at those fair and noble women, whose light veils, fluttering with every breath of wind, protected them from the sun, but not from the glances of others.

As soon as the queen saw Du Guesclin coming towards her,— easily recognizing him by golden armor and constable's sword, which a squire carried before him upon a blue velvet cushion embroidered with golden fleurs-de-lys, — she commanded that the white mules drawing her car

halt, and hastily descended from the seat where she was sitting.

Following the example of Juana of Castile, without in the least knowing what she was about to do, the king and the ladies of their suite alighted.

The queen advanced towards Du Guesclin, who, perceiving her, leaped from his horse. Then she quickened her steps, says the Chronicle, and hastened towards him with outstretched arms.

He unbuckled the visor of his helmet, and it swung behind him.

When the queen saw his face uncovered, hanging upon his neck, she embraced him as though she were the tenderest of sisters.

"It is you," she exclaimed, with so profound and genuine emotion that it won the hearts of all present,— "you, illustrious constable, to whom I owe my crown, the unexpected honor that has descended upon my house! I thank you, knight. God will reward you fitly. As for myself, I can only strive to make my gratitude as great as your service."

At these words, and that royal embrace,— so high an honor for the good constable,— a cry of assent, formidable almost, because of the innumerable voices that mingled, rose from the heart of the people and the army, followed by unanimous plaudits.

"Noël to the good constable!" they cried. "Joy and prosperity to Queen Juana of Castile!"

The king's sisters were less enthusiastic. These young women jested maliciously; they eyed the constable askance, and, as the sight of the good knight naturally reminded them of the ideal they had formed, they compared it with the reality before them, and whispered among themselves, —

"So this is the illustrious warrior! What a huge head he has!"

"And just look, countess: he is round-shouldered!" continued the second sister.

"And bow-legged!" said the third.

"Yes, but he has made our brother a king," said the eldest, to end this discussion, which was scarcely flattering to the illustrious knight.

And, indeed, the soul of this worthy knight, that great soul which had inspired him to so many noble and beautiful deeds, was hidden in a mould unworthy of it: his big Breton head, so well-stocked with bright ideas, with generous obstinacy, might have seemed vulgar to one who failed to observe the fire that flashed from his black eyes, and that expression of strength and gentleness combined which made the harmony of his features.

It is quite true, he was bow-legged; but the good knight had sprung to his steed so often for the greater glory of France, that only ingratitude itself would dare to speak slightingly of that curvature he had contracted from being compelled so often to accommodate himself to the generous dimensions of his steed.

And doubtless the second sister had remarked with truth that Du Guesclin was round-shouldered; but attached to those homely shoulders were the two muscular arms which, in a fray, could deal such damage to horse and rider.

The people could scarcely observe that he was fair, but could at least say that he was formidable.

After this exchange of courtesies, having shown her gratitude, the queen mounted a white mule of Aragon, caparisoned with a housing embroidered in gold; the harness, wrought in silver, adorned with jewels, was a gift from the citizens of Burgos.

She besought Du Guesclin to escort her on her left, and to accompany the king's sisters she selected Messires Olivier de Mauny, Le Bègue de Vilaine, and fifty knights, who set out on foot, keeping within close distance of the maids of honor.

And thus they reached the palace, where the king awaited them, seated beneath a dais of cloth of gold; near him was Comte de la Marché, who had arrived that very morning from France. The king rose, perceiving the queen; the queen alighted from her horse, and, approaching the king, knelt before him. The king raised her, and having embraced her, pronounced aloud these words, —

"To the Monastery of Las Huelgas!"

It was in this monastery that the coronation was to take place.

All followed king and queen, crying God speed.

During all this noise and festivity Agénor had withdrawn to a dismal and deserted lodging, accompanied by his faithful Musaron.

But the latter, who was not in love, but, on the contrary, curious and eager to ferret news as a Gascon squire should be, had left his master, shut up by himself, to visit the town and witness all the ceremonies. When he returned in the evening he had seen all and knew all that had passed.

He found Agénor wandering about in the garden outside his lodging, and, anxious to impart the news which he had received, he informed his master that the constable was no longer Count of Soria merely; for, before seating herself at table, the queen had asked a favor of the king, and this favor being granted, she had bestowed upon Du Guesclin the County of Trastamare.

"Fortune smiles," said Agénor, distractedly.

"And that is not all, sir," Musaron went on, encouraged to continue by this answer, which, brief as it was, proved to him that at least his master had heard him. "The king's pride was piqued at this request, and before the constable had time to recover himself he said, —

"'Messire, the County of Trastamare is the queen's gift; and now it is my turn: I will give you the Duchy of Molinia.'"

"Honors are heaped upon him, and it is but just," said Agénor.

"But that is not all," Musaron continued. "Every one has had his share in the royal munificence!"

Agénor smiled, thinking how he had been left out completely, although, in his lesser way, he had rendered Don Henry some slight service.

"Every one?" he asked. "How so?"

"Yes, seigneurs, captains, officers, and even the soldiers. Indeed, I cannot cease asking myself two questions: first, How is Spain big enough to hold all the king is giving away? and, secondly, How can these men be strong enough to carry away all that has been given to them?"

But Agénor was listening no longer, and in vain Musaron awaited some reply to this last pleasantry of his. Night had overtaken them in the mean while, and Agénor leaned against the balcony, carved in trefoil, its apertures filled with leafage and blossoms, vines which clung about the marble columns and arched themselves about the windows. Agénor could hear from a distance the shouts of the revellers; they sounded fainter after a while. The evening breeze refreshed his brow, which burned with the fervor of his thoughts; the penetrating odor of jasmine and myrtle recalled the garden of the

Alcazar at Seville, and Ernauton's garden at Bordeaux. And these were the memories which Musaron's chatter had interrupted.

And Musaron, who understood handling his master according to circumstances, a task not difficult for those who love us and know all our secrets, chose a new subject to entice his master, and one which he believed must divert him from his reverie.

"Do you know, Seigneur Agénor," he said, "that all this feasting is but the prelude to war, and a great expedition against Don Pedro is to follow to-day's ceremony, one which may give the country to him who has taken the crown?"

"Very well," said Agénor, "let it be so; we will undertake this expedition."

"But it will take us far, messire."

"Very well, — the farther the better."

"But we are going to that land" — and here Musaron pointed to immeasurable space — "to that land where Messire Bertrand wishes to leave the carcasses of the Free Companies to rot; do you understand?"

"Even so; let ours rot with them!"

"'T is an unspeakable honor for me, monseigneur! But —"

"But what?"

"It has been wisely said that master is always master, and servant is always servant; he who serves is but an ill-favored thing."

"How so, Musaron?" asked Agénor, struck this time by the plaintive tone his squire had assumed.

"Because there is this difference between us: you are a noble knight; you serve your masters for the distinction it will bring you, so it seems; but I —"

"Yes, you?"

"I serve for distinction's sake also, first of all, and then for the pleasure I find in your society, and lastly for the sake of handling my wages."

"But I have my wages also!" answered Agénor, with some bitterness. "Did you not see how the other day Messire Bertrand brought me one hundred gold crowns from the king, — the new king?"

"I know it, messire."

"And of those hundred gold crowns," added the young man with a smile, "had you not your share?"

"My fair share, certes, for I got them all."

"Then you must perceive that I, too, have my wages, since you had the handling of them."

"Yes, but what I would come at is this, — you have not been rewarded according to your merit. One hundred gold crowns! I could name thirty officers who have received five hundred each, and who have been made barons, bannerets, to the bargain, or at least seneschals of his household."

"Which means, does it not, that you think the king has forgotten me?"

"Completely."

"Better so, Musaron, better so. I am glad to be forgotten by kings; for whilst they forget me, they can at least do me no injury."

"Come, now," said Musaron, "do you think to make me believe that you are happy moping by yourself in this garden, while the others yonder are busied clinking their golden cups, and offering fair ladies their sweetest smiles?"

"And yet it is so, Master Musaron," said Agénor. "And when I say so, I beg you will believe it. I find more food for pleasure here beneath these myrtles, alone with my thoughts, than if I had the company of a hun-

dred knights, and every one of them drinking himself tipsy with the wine of Xeres, in the royal palace."

"That is not natural!"

"And yet it is so."

Musaron shook his head.

"I would have served your lordship at table, and it would have been so flattering for me, had I been able to say, on my return to my country, 'I served my master at table, at the coronation feast of King Henry of Trastamare!'"

Agénor shook his head in turn. A melancholy smile crossed his face.

"You are the squire of a poor adventurer, Master Musaron," said he; "be glad if you are alive. That, at least, is a proof that you have not died of hunger, which might have happened us as it has chanced to so many others. Besides — the hundred gold crowns — "

"The hundred gold crowns, certainly. I have them," said Musaron; "but how long shall I have them if I spend them? And then what shall we have to live upon? With what shall we pay doctors, when your fine zeal for Don Henry has given you your death wound and brought us to the brink of the grave?"

"You are a worthy servant, Musaron," said Agénor, with a smile, "and your well-being is dear to me. Retire, now, Musaron, for it grows late. Leave me to amuse myself once more after my own fashion, and in communion with my own thoughts. Go, and to-morrow you will feel more disposed to enter service again."

Musaron obeyed, and withdrew, smiling slyly; for he believed he had awakened a little ambition in his master's heart, and he trusted that this ambition might bear fruit.

But nothing of the sort. Agénor was entirely absorbed

by thoughts of love, and not at all with duchies and treasures; he was suffering from that intense nostalgia which causes us to regard regretfully as a foster-land, every country where we experienced happiness. He thought with longing of the gardens of the Alcazar and of Bordeaux. And yet as a trace of light remains in the heavens, though the sun has disappeared, some part of Musaron's conversation lingered in his mind, even after his squire's departure.

"I," he soliloquized, "*I* become a rich lord, a powerful captain! No, I presage that destiny holds nothing of the sort for me. I have inclination, ardor, powers, only to accomplish a single object. What matters it to me that I am forgotten in the distribution of royal favors? All kings are ingrates. What matters it to me that the king did not summon me to the feast and make me distinguished among his captains? Men are forgetful and unjust. And after all," he added, "when I am weary of their forgetfulness and their ingratitude I will demand my dismissal."

"Very fine indeed!" exclaimed a voice not far away, and Agénor trembled, and recoiled almost in dismay. "Very fine indeed, young man, but we need you!"

Agénor turned, and saw two men wrapped in dark mantles, who had just emerged from the remotest part of the bower of verdure where he had imagined himself alone, his preoccupation preventing him from noticing the noise of their steps upon the gravel.

The speaker approached Mauléon and touched his arm.

"The constable!" murmured the young man.

"Who comes, that his presence here may prove he has not forgotten you," continued Bertrand.

"Yes, but you are not the king," said Mauléon.

"True, the constable is not the king," said the second personage, "but *I* am, count, and I remember well that to you in part I owe my crown."

Agénor recognized Don Henry.

"Seigneur," he stammered, quite confused, "pardon, I beseech you."

"Willingly, messire," answered the king; "only as you have received no portion of the recompense of the rest, you shall have something better than they."

"No more, sire, no more," said Mauléon. "I wish nothing, for it will be thought that I asked for it."

Don Henry smiled.

"Be calm, knight," he answered; "none shall say that, I answer for them, for none of them all would ask that which I am about to offer you. The mission is full of danger, though at the same time so honorable that the attention of all Christendom will be directed to you. Seigneur de Mauléon, you shall be my ambassador, and I am a king!"

"Oh, monseigneur, I was far from expecting such an honor."

"Come, no modesty, young man," said Bertrand; "the king desired at first to send me where you are going, but he reflected that there would be need of me to lead our companions, who are somewhat difficult men to lead, I swear to you! I was speaking to His Highness of you at the very moment when you were accusing him of forgetfulness; I was speaking of you as a man of eloquence and decision, as well as one thoroughly versed in the Spanish tongue. Coming from Béarn, you are, in fact, partly Spanish. But, as the king tells you, the mission is dangerous, for whoever undertakes it must first of all find Don Pedro."

"Don Pedro!" exclaimed Agénor, with a transport of delight.

"Ah, knight, that pleases you, I perceive," answered Henry.

Agénor felt that his joy had made him indiscreet; he tried to curb it.

"Yes, sire, that would please me well," he said, "for it would give me an opportunity of serving Your Highness."

"And, indeed, you shall serve me, and greatly," replied Henry; "but I warn you, my noble messenger, that it will be at the peril of your life."

"Command, sire."

"You must cross the plain of Segovia, where Don Pedro is said to be at this moment," continued the king; "as letter of credence I will give you a jewel, which came from our brother, and which Don Pedro will recognize at once. But consider well what I am about to say, before you accept the mission, sir knight."

"Speak, sire."

"One thing is enjoined upon you: if you should be attacked upon the road, made prisoner, threatened with death, you are not to betray the purpose of your mission, for it might discourage our partisans too much, were they informed that at the very high tide of my prosperity I made overtures of conciliation to my enemies."

"Of conciliation!" exclaimed Agénor, in surprise.

"The constable desires it," said the king.

"Sire, I do not merely desire, I implore!" said the constable. "I have besought Your Highness to consider well how grave an affair it is in the sight of God, this war which you would wage. It is not enough to have earthly kings upon our side, in such a matter, if the

King of Heaven be against us. True, I am not fulfilling my instructions in counselling peace. But King Charles V. himself, in his wisdom, will approve my conduct, when I say to him, 'Sire, these were two children, born of the same father; each of these brothers had drawn his sword against the other, and if they had met, one would have slain the other.'

"Sir king, in order that God should pardon him who has drawn his sword against a brother, he who asks God's pardon should have right upon his side. Don Pedro offered you peace; you refused, for if you had accepted, it might have been believed that you feared; but now that you are conqueror, consecrated, and a king, offer him peace in turn, and men will say that you are a magnanimous prince, free of ambition, the friend of justice only; and that portion of the provinces you lose now will return to you later; you will be the free arbiter of your subjects. If he refuses, then we shall pursue our course; you will have no cause to reproach yourself; he will have brought his own ruin upon himself."

"Yes," answered Henry, with a sigh; "but shall I then be able to find another such opportunity to destroy him?"

"Seigneur," said Bertrand, "I have said what my conscience dictated. A man who would walk in the strait road must not say to himself that perhaps he might have followed it just as directly, had he made a turn here and there."

"So be it," said the king, agreeing, at least in appearance.

"Then Your Majesty is convinced?" asked Bertrand.

"Yes, irrevocably."

"And has no regrets?"

"Oh, that is asking too much, sir constable. I have given you full authority to make peace for me; do not ask more at this moment."

"Then, sire, permit me to give the knight his instructions, those we decided upon."

"Do not be concerned with that," said the king, quickly. "I will explain everything to the count, and besides," he added, quickly, in an undertone, "you know what I have to deliver to him."

"Very well, sire," answered Bertrand, who suspected nothing because of the king's eagerness to have him withdraw.

And he departed. But he had scarcely crossed the threshold when he retraced his steps.

"Remember, sire," he said, "a peace upon good terms, half of the kingdom if necessary, paternal conditions, — a wise manifesto, most Christian, and so worded that pride will find nothing in it that offends."

"Oh, certes!" said the king, coloring in spite of himself; "rest assured, constable, that my intentions — "

Bertrand did not believe it would be wise to insist further. And yet his mistrust seemed to have been aroused for a moment, but the king parted from him with so amicable a smile that suspicion slumbered again.

The king's eyes followed Bertrand.

"Knight," he said to Mauléon, when they had lost sight of the constable in the trees, "here is the jewel which will secure your reception by Don Pedro; but efface from your mind the words the constable has just spoken, that mine may be more deeply graven upon your memory."

Agénor indicated by a sign of the head that he had heard.

"I will promise peace to Don Pedro," continued Henry; "I will give him half of Spain, from Madrid to Cadiz; I will remain his ally and friend, but upon one condition."

Agénor raised his head, more surprised at the tone of voice than at the prince's words.

"Yes," said Henry, "whatever was said to the constable, — there is a condition. You look surprised, Mauléon, that I should have anything to conceal from the good knight. Listen. The constable is a Breton, as stubborn as he is upright; his instruction has not been of the sort that could teach him how little value is attached to an oath in Spain, that land where passions sear the heart as the sun burns the soil. Therefore he cannot understand how Don Pedro hates me. He forgets, loyal Breton that he is, how treacherously Don Pedro murdered my brother Frederic, and how his master's sister was strangled, though no judgment had been passed upon her. He imagines that here, as in France, we wage war upon the battlefield. King Charles, who commanded him to exterminate Don Pedro, understood better; and it is his wisdom which inspires the orders I give you."

Agénor bowed, terrified in his inmost soul, by these royal confidences.

"You will then discover Don Pedro," continued the king, "and you will promise him in my name all I have said, provided that the Moor Mothril and twelve notables of his court, whose names are upon this vellum, be delivered to me as hostages with their goods and their families."

Agénor trembled. The king had said "twelve nobles and their families." If Mothril came to King Henry's court, Aïssa must come with him.

"In which case," continued the king, "you shall lead them hither."

A shudder of joy passed through Agénor's frame, and did not escape Henry, although he mistook its cause.

"Are you afraid to go?" said Don Henry; "fear nothing. You think that in the midst of those wretches your life may be endangered on the way. But no, the danger is not great; at least I do not deem it so. Reach the Douro as quickly as possible, and before you have crossed it you will find upon this side of the river an escort, who will give you shelter and assure me of the possession of these hostages."

"But Your Highness is deceived," said Mauléon. "It is not fear which causes me to tremble."

"What, then?"

"Impatience to begin my travels in your service. I would be gone already!"

"Well spoken! You are a valiant knight!" exclaimed Henry. "Noble heart! and I tell you, youth, you will not suffer through your devotion to my fortunes."

"Ah, seigneur," said Mauléon, "already you have rewarded me beyond my deserts!"

"Then you will set out —"

"At once."

"Do so. Here are three diamonds which have been named The Three Magi; Jews have valued each at one thousand gold crowns, and there is no lack of Jews in Spain. Here are also a thousand gold crowns, but these are merely for your squire's valise."

"Seigneur, you heap favors upon me."

"On your return," said Henry, "I will make you a banneret with a banner of your own, and one hundred lances, equipped at my expense."

"Oh, not another word, seigneur, I beseech you!"

"But promise me you will not tell the constable the conditions I have imposed upon my brother."

"Oh, fear not, sire! He would oppose these conditions, and I desire he should oppose them as little as you do."

"Thanks, knight," said Henry, "this is more than brave; you have intelligence!"

"I am in love," murmured Mauléon to himself; "and they say love bestows upon us all those qualities we never before possessed."

The king hastened to rejoin Du Guesclin.

Agénor awakened his squire, and two hours later, by the bright moonlight, master and squire were galloping away over the road leading to Segovia.

END OF VOL. I.

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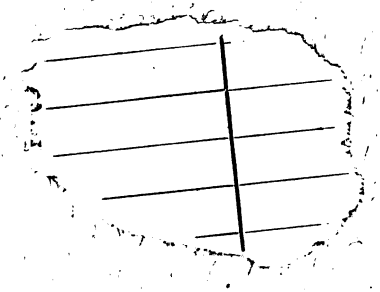

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